

# HOW THEY DID IT LIFE STORIES

GANDHI



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*by*

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## CHAPTER I

### GANDHI—THE MAN

HITLER, an Austrian became Chancellor of Germany ; Stalin, a Georgian rules over Russia ; Napoleon, a Corsican rose to be the greatest war lord the French ever had and the Scots prevail over the English when it comes to the highest posts in the English Civil Service, India is no exception to the rule, that if one comes from another country, the chances of becoming a prophet are better. Young, ambitious, Gandhi lived in South Africa for many years before he evolved a moral-philosophy specially adapted for Indian tastes and realised that only through a return to the deepest roots of Indian thought, and the simplest tastes of Indian life would it be possible to appeal to the Indian masses.

Gandhi's aim can be stated in a simple form and alternatively in the form of a decalogue. A simple definition would be to say that Gandhi wanted to reduce the great variety and the wide contrasts of India to the lowest common denominator which would enable the Indian nationalist movement to make a progress on the Indian continent (for India is really nothing less than a

continent) ; so when he found that European ways were not helpful he returned to the loin cloth and the loom to bring about Indian reforms. His decalogue is not so simple, of course. He wanted Indians :

1. To know and respect truth.
2. To know and respect love as expressed by the strangely beautiful Indian word 'Ahimsa.'
3. To practise chastity or 'Brahmacharya.'
4. To restrain their palate. Gandhi always taught that eating was only good for the mere sustenance of the body, abstaining from luxurious meals, intoxicating drinks and drugs.
5. To abstain from the possession of things for themselves.
6. To adhere to the simple rule that bread must be earned by the sweat of one's brow and that easily-earned money would bring no blessing.
7. To appreciate 'Swadeshi,' the belief that man's primary duty is to serve his neighbour.
8. To believe that there was no such thing as a chosen people as all mankind was equal.
9. To believe that all the great faiths of the world are equal.
10. To be fearless.

Compare this with the decalogue of Moses. It contains all the elements contained therein, yet in a different form, appealing more to the instinct and

innermost thoughts of the Indians instead of to logic as Moses appealed to the Jews. Gandhi attempted nothing less than the driving out of the machine age enforced by European culture in India, in order to return to India's ancient pastoral life. He does not want locomotives, television sets, typewriters, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, and all the paraphernalia of European man makes him sick ; he wants the Indian to go back to his ancient *Khaddar*, the cotton cloth which he spins himself and to eat fruits, vegetables and cereals raised by his own handwork from India's soil. And to achieve this he wants British administrators to leave the Indians alone.

Has he achieved this ? Yes and no. He achieved a certain degree of progress in Indian constitution. His personal intervention in the Indian nationalist movement gave a powerful fillip to the efforts to bring about a free India ; he achieved a new India in which the Indian could co-operate with the British administrator on an equal level and with the hope of a final dominion status ; yet, on the other hand, he failed to arouse more than a fraction of India's large and varied population ; he failed to unite the nationalist movement ; he gave up his methods of fighting the British and even retired from active political life ; though his advice is still being eagerly sought, the persistent and steady shaping of British policy towards progress in India has taken the wind out of his sails.

What were his weapons? Later we will explain how Gandhi's mode of life predestined him for the methods which he chose while he was still a 'fighter.' For a 'fighter' he was undoubtedly before he retired, only his weapons were different from those of the ordinary soldier. Gandhi, a lonely Indian reformer, faced a gigantic empire with the most up-to-date military equipment of the world and the best officers of any army. There was no chance against the aeroplanes, the warships, the regiments of the British Empire. So instead of active, positive weapons he chose three negative weapons :

Non-purchase.

Non-co-operation.

Non-violence.

His first weapon was deadly. It was the first historical application of a nation-wide boycott for political reasons. Gandhi called upon 350,000,000 Indians to cease buying English goods. He threw off his own good clothes to wear home-made Indian loin cloth in order to induce his followers to give up buying Lancashire products. Soon, thousands of British textile workers in and around Manchester were thrown out of work, looms stopped working, offices were closed down, because a small, thin, dark man set his will against the will of the British administrators. The rich Lancashire trade in cotton goods in India was gradually lost owing to Gandhi's movement. Many Indians set themselves

to the task of making their own cloth, others bought Japanese, but by 1930 Lancashire lost orders to the extent of 1,000,000,000.

This was indeed the deadliest weapon, for the British administration was less scared of his second weapon, non-cooperation. For years Gandhi preached abstention from Government and strikes against taxes. But this weapon broke before the perseverance of the patient administrators. Gandhi admitted failure when he personally accepted an invitation to attend round-table conferences in London. Even though he did not actually come to an agreement with the Government and maintained his opposition, the ice was broken. Non-cooperation as a weapon to-day almost lost its meaning in India.

His third weapon, non-violence, had no actual value inland. With a deeply moral appeal to the conscience of all Indian patriots he exhorted them to impose upon themselves passive resistance to force. This was stuff of the highest moral value, something which acted as his most valuable propaganda abroad. It was an appeal not only to the Indians but to the intelligent, educated classes all over the world who are ceaselessly praying that the force of the gun should be deposed and in its place the force of the human morale should take over control of our actions. Bloodshed in India, Gandhi felt, would have caused not only confusion and heavy sacrifices, it would have also justified violent action by the British in India. Instead Gandhi made many police,



officers in India embarrassed when forced to take a violent step.

Many Indian extremists are disappointed that after having opened his fight so brilliantly, Gandhi finally settled down with minor objects in the last few years of his life in his mind, instead of retaining the highest post in the Indian national movement or taking office under the new Indian regulations. But perhaps the greatest achievement in Gandhi's life is that after preaching non-purchase, non-co-operation and non-violence, he also realises that the time has come for non-agitation. The new Indian Act makes it possible for the Indians to co-operate in further progress and Gandhi who is no friend of totalitarian movements knows that India's future now lies in co-operation with the British Government so he has retired from political life.

## CHAPTER II

### GANDHI—THE YOUTH

MAHATMA means 'Great Soul.' It is a courtesy title given by the Indians, most of whom appreciate the soul of a man first, before they look into the lining of his pocket. His full name is Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. He was born on October 2nd, 1869, in Porbandar, a small British dependency in the North-West of India. His ancestors were not of a high caste, but well educated people and their lives were so close to the North-West Frontier, where British troops have been carrying on a small warfare for a century, that young Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was early driven to the discussion of political problems.

His parents steeped him with the theory of *Ahimsa*, that is love and non-violence from the Jain school of Hindu teachings. The founder of this school of thought was Mahavira, an Indian saint and scholar, who had much influence over the life of Gandhi. Both the father and mother of Gandhi lived a life in which money mattered nothing. What was left to the family by the grand-parents, whatever the little business relations of Gandhi's father brought in

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twenty-two. Three years in London had made him slightly cynical. He lost his earlier beliefs, his ambitions to become Europeanised, but he has not yet found a way to live a practical life which would give satisfaction to his agile brain. The Bhagavad Gita which gave him so much pleasure, as the climax of Indian literature represented in his eyes leisure and enjoyment. A book which provided dreamy hours, a polished mind, happy soul, but life was different; life required a mind which would meet difficult situations which had nothing to do with the parables of Bhagavad Gita.

At home a shock awaited him. His mother had died before his arrival. She was ill for a long time, doctors had given her up, but Gandhi was not notified. His family feared that M.K. would at once abandon his studies and return home. He was very much attached to his mother who was first to read Vishnu texts with Mohandas Karamchand. He could not stay in the North-West with the restricted atmosphere and the wound which the loss of his mother caused. He went south to the High Court of Bombay, where the 'thin man' became one of the best young orators at law.

Two years later Gandhi became a noted native lawyer. Thus, when the 'uncrowned ruler of Bombay,' the immensely wealthy Parsi landowner Dada Abdoola had a law suit to settle in South Africa, he chose M. K. Gandhi to travel across the Pacific to defend him. Dada Abdoola was generous

and Gandhi's allowance was liberal. But in 1893, when Gandhi arrived in South Africa, the life of the Indian immigrants in that country was not much better than that of the blacks in the jungles. Both the English and Dutch treated the Hindus as ordinary coolies who were not allowed to ride on the railway except in third-class carriages specially reserved for them. First- and second-class were reserved for Europeans. Gandhi, a wealthy London-educated lawyer, despised the rules. Whenever he travelled in South Africa he insisted on first-class fare.

One incident may have been responsible for much of the contempt of the Europeans which he expressed in his later speeches. Once he set out with a first-class ticket to distant Pretoria to attend to some business in connection with the estates of his employer, Dada Abdoola.

The train stopped at Maritzburg, where a European traveller entered the compartment in which Gandhi sat alone. He looked contemptuously at the coloured passenger and said brusquely, "get out, coolie." Gandhi controlled himself. With great dignity he pulled out his first-class ticket and answered "I will stay, if you object find yourself a seat elsewhere." The European was outraged. He insisted on delaying the train and called for the station-master to implement the rules generally in practise in the country. The official asked Gandhi to move out of the compartment. Gandhi became,

slightly ruffled. "I have paid for my ticket," he said protesting, "at the same rate as this gentleman, and I will stay where I am. Moreover, for no reason at all, he insulted me by calling me a coolie. I am much less a coolie than either you or this gentleman who stands here threatening me with his fist, ready to strike me. I have a right to his respect; I have my ticket which entitles me to stay, and here I remain."

A few minutes later the station-master returned with a policeman. At the request of the law's representative Gandhi quietly followed him to the platform but refused to take his seat in a third-class carriage with a first-class ticket. Despite the appeals of the station-master and even some Europeans who were at the station and who appealed to him in a friendly manner to see reason and go to the third-class, he remained on the platform and the train left without him.

Gandhi was left alone in a strange town. Fortunately he remembered the name of Amod Bhayat, a wealthy Indo-Arabian business man who lived in Maritzburg. Armed with the name of his employer, he knocked at the door of Amod, and asked for a night's lodging. Amod was a good host. "Why in the name of Allah," he asked Gandhi, "did not my friend Abdoola instruct you to travel third-class? How rash of you to go against the country's rules. If I were a young man, I would only travel third-class. There you find your equals, and it is also

much cheaper. In any case you arrive at the same time as those travelling first-class. Moreover, one has to be grateful, because suppose there was no first-class at all. What would the English do who built the railway with their money? Maybe they would forbid us to travel altogether. My friend, we must be grateful for this miracle and content with travelling third-class. Do not hinder the function of the miracle. Go to bed. To-morrow you will see reason."

Next morning, obstinately enough, Gandhi sent a telegram to Sir David Hunter, director of the Indian railways. Abdoola, his chief, who was then in South Africa, personally called on Sir David and impressed him with the personality of Gandhi. Finally, the director of the railway assured him that he would see to it that Gandhi would not be molested any more on the railways.

But again trouble appeared on the horizon. Gandhi left the next day and at Wolkrust left the railway to continue his journey by coach. But this time the coachman remonstrated with him because Gandhi's ticket was for an earlier journey. As he had delayed a day his seat was already sold. The director of the coach line was called in and he found him a back seat in the coach, but during the journey the conductor insisted that he should leave it. Finally, he got a seat beside the coachman. Gandhi submitted to this indignity in silence, but he would not be defeated. Quietly he repeated to the conductor at



## CHAPTER III

### GANDHI IN SOUTH AFRICA

TWENTY years of political work in defence of Indian rights now follow as the second great chapter of Gandhi's life. He is maturing into a leader of a small community of 150,000 Indians who have settled in South Africa, chiefly in the Natal district. He is not yet the leader of a continent, as he is later to become when he places himself at the head of the great Indian nationalist movement. In South Africa, from 1894 till 1914, he works unselfishly and as he progresses from one station to the other two things become clear to him. The first is that he could not carry on his profession as a lawyer and remain at the same time the leader of a small community of moral purists as the majority of Indians then were. His profession brought him into almost daily contact with incidents which his Hindu caste education placed among immoral things. For several months at the turn of 1893-94, he was struggling to decide his future. Finally, he turned against continuing his legal practice. At the same time as he gave it up he also decided to be logical about it. He turned not only from his European education, but also from his European

habits. He began to revert to the ancient habits of his people. The second thing is his recognition of the fact that in order to improve the lot of the Indians one must go to the fountainhead, that is to India, where the great mass of the Indian people were just beginning to wake up under the whipping tongue of Dadabhai, founder of modern Indian nationalism. But it took him twenty years of work before he realised what methods were required to meet European methods, and before he realised that South Africa was just one outpost of the Great British Empire. Therefore, the solution of the Indian problem in South Africa would be only of small significance. The solution was required for the entire Indian community.

In those days South Africa strongly discouraged further entry of Indian settlers and in order to keep the relatives of those who were already in the country out in India, she treated her Indians rather stepfatherly. The whites, both British and Dutch, were full of fear that the numerous Indian races would one day swamp the whole of the continent of South Africa. Difficulties were piled on the shoulders of the Indians in the country. Their taxes were forced up by every new Government, their police supervision was much more stringent than that in any other section of the country and the authorities did everything in their power to make them feel that they were only a tolerated alien and inferior section of the population.

In fairness it must be mentioned that Gandhi considered that the Dutch burghers far more intolerant towards the Indians than the British since he was frequently thrown out of Boer hotels whose managements would not put him up. Often he decided to leave this unhospitable land for India. But each time his legal mind revolted against the treatment of his brethren until he finally decided to take up their cause. This was done at great personal sacrifice. In the service of his wealthy employer he made as much as £5,000 a year and lived in luxury in a beautiful bungalow near Johannesburg. He threw this away in order to travel from Indian village to Indian village in Natal, delivering addresses, collecting signatures for petitions. His standard of life was reduced to £1 a week in order to live the same life as the people he undertook to defend.

The Indians in Natal had their own little Congress. It was a miserable affair which never dared to raise its voice to the South African Government, until the London-educated lawyer Gandhi showed them that it was possible to criticise the white man's action and even to attack it without being destroyed. Thus Gandhi electrified the Natal Indian Congress. With the support of Abdoola and a number of Indians in the country he founded his first newspaper, the *Indian Opinion*, which became the centre of Indian education and expression. It was published in English and three Indian dialects. In addition he

formed an Association of Indian Education which organised educational lectures for the inhabitants of even the poorest Indian hut, it issued Indian leaflets, pamphlets and taught the Indians to be bold in demanding their rights as human beings.

In search for the proper political weapons for a defenceless, small community, he discovered the principle of non-resistance which really originated from Count Tolstoy. His own fate was very similar to that of Tolstoy, who took vows to live a humble life together with the poor people. He, too, gave up wealth to live as the poorest and for the poorest. To learn a little more about it, he started a correspondence with Tolstoy in which he asked him for advice. As a result of this correspondence, Gandhi founded at Phoenix, near Natal, in 1904, a Tolstoyan colony of poor farmers. The farmers which were received by him had to take vows that they would never desire wealth which is immoral and inhuman. Tolstoy took a personal interest in the development of this little community and was a regular reader of *Indian Opinion*, which was forwarded to him regularly by Gandhi. Right up till his death in 1911, Tolstoy remained in contact with Gandhi's settlement. Had he been younger he would have certainly gone out to Africa to inspect after his own heart.

Once his community

famous non-co-

against the methods of Government and the taxation he urged his followers not to co-operate with the public services and not to pay taxes. The Smuts Government naturally did not look upon him with favour. Nor did his own countrymen. Many Indians turned against him and cursed him for daring to raise the Indian standard in a country in which they considered themselves guests. They blamed Gandhi for many of their troubles thinking that without a nationalist movement and the Gandhi colony the Government would not pay so much attention to the Indians' fate. Once when Gandhi was on the road preaching as usual he was beaten by Indians. Policemen saved him this time, but a few years later when he was arrested the furious populace nearly beat him to death. He was left lying in the street as the mob thought that he was dead. On recovering he found himself in the prison hospital.

The Authorities considered him a dangerous element, although in times of crisis he gave up his own particular movement in order to rally to the Government. In 1899, during the Boer War, he organised a Red Cross unit. A few years later there was a plague in Johannesburg. He organised a medical mission and a hospital. In 1906, when the natives revolted in Natal, Gandhi organised his own battalion of Indian riflemen at the head of which he joined the Government forces. When the revolt was crushed,

Gandhi was publicly thanked by the Government, he accepted the thanks but declared that he was not opposing the cause of the natives, but merely their violent methods.

The native revolt and the victory over them made the South African Government in Johannesburg anxious for the future. Legislation was introduced against the natives and also against the Asiatics. The new act was issued by the Smuts Government. At once Gandhi jumped into action. In September, 1906, he organised a big meeting of Indians in Johannesburg, at which the principle of 'Passive resistance' was declared. The Chinese of South Africa joined the movement. The Government's reply was the arrest of Gandhi and all the stewards of the meeting. They were soon released, but Gandhi was re-arrested twice again. Hundreds of Indians were imprisoned. Smuts then coined the description 'conscientious objectors' applied to the Indians.

Back in Greater India the progressive Indians began to wake up. They realised that their brethren needed their help. Mass meetings were organised all over India, as a result of which Lord Harding, the Viceroy, issued an appeal to the South African Government in consequence of which General Smuts withdrew from the Statute Book the law against the Indians in 1909. Gandhi achieved his first big victory.

As the anti-Indian movement was chiefly encouraged by the rich Boer families, it is not surprising that Gandhi found many friends among the English. There were two rich Englishmen, W. W. Pearson and C. F. Andrews, both well known and respected in Africa, who have taken up Gandhi's cause. Their co-operation was very valuable and was one of the contributory causes of the change of Smut's policy.

An Imperial Commission was appointed which delivered a report as a result of which new legislation was introduced. Gandhi's demands were conceded almost to the full. The special tax on Indians was annulled, the restriction on the settlement of Indians was removed. Henceforth Indians were allowed to settle anywhere in Natal.

During the struggle in South Africa, Gandhi also found time to write his first, full-length book. It was called *Hind Swaraj* (Home Rule for Indians), a little booklet based on the love-philosophy of *Ahimsa*, a poem rather than political philosophy. Thousands of copies were sold in Africa, but tens of thousands were bought by India. This book was published in 1908. Ever since the book became known in India Gandhi began to receive appeals from his old friends in India, from Indian nationalists who never met him, to return to India to lead the fight against the local British authorities. When, in 1914, Gandhi's non-violence was victorious over force and

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full rights of citizenship were restored to the Indians, he was inundated by letters from Indians calling him home. Gandhi decided to return home. He had left his country 21 years earlier as an unimportant young lawyer. In 1914, he returned as the leader of his people, fêted as a prince in Bombay.

## CHAPTER IV

### GANDHI IN INDIA

It is not in the nature of Gandhi to fight an opponent who is in trouble. In 1914, when Britain declared war on the Central Powers, the whole of the British Empire followed her loyally into the struggle. Indian nationalists were at first split. 'Congress,' the great institution of Indian nationalism under Gandhi, had existed for decades as an institution of minor importance. Gandhi counselled patience and co-operation until the end of the war. The British officials who reported to London that in an emergency India would loyally do her duty, correctly judged the situation. For almost six years Gandhi was satisfied with organising units of the Indian Congress in the farthest corner of the Indian Empire. While he advised every Indian to join the great struggle on the side of Britain he also prepared the ground for the political battle which was to ensue.

In South Africa his task had been restricted. Now he was dealing with one-fifth of the human race 350,000,000 people speaking 222 languages. About 3,000 years ago the Mongoloid natives of India were

driven into the mountains by the savage Aryan invaders, the ancestors of the present high caste Hindu classes. Under the social code formed by their Brahmin leaders the defeated natives were declared 'Untouchables.' They represent to-day, 75,000,000, or more than one-fifth of India's population. Caste Hindus number 170,000,000, but these are sub-divided into thousands of different castes. One caste is closed to the other. The upper castes had the hereditary right to deal cruelly with the lower castes. During the last 900 years, Moslems kept invading the country. Moghuls, Persians, Turks, Afghans, Arabs, have from time to time interrupted the full power of the Hindus. They are the ancestors of the 80,000,000 Moslems who are to-day living in India complicating the problem of the continent. They are responsible for the religious battles, which have cost thousands of lives. In addition there are 10,000,000 Buddhists, mostly in Burma, 6,000,000 Indian Christians, mostly former 'Untouchables' converted by the numerous Christian missionaries who are trying to improve the lot of the Outcasts, there are 4,000,000 Sikhs, over 500,000 Europeans, Anglo-Indians and Parsees.

The British rule in India is based on the claim that this Empire of unlimited contrasts would have never prospered without the British rule. In the last hundred years or so over £1,000,000,000 was sunk in the 40,000 miles of railways, 30,000,000

acres of irrigated land, the great schools, universities, hospitals, the great coffee, jute, cotton, tea, coal and mining industries, whereas the other Asiatic countries remained far below the prosperous standard of India. The British claim that this tremendous Empire is governed mostly by Indians themselves under the supervision of only 3,000 British Civil Servants. The police force is run with 1,400 Europeans and 187,000 Indians.

But Gandhi's point of view was that the Indians should be left alone to work out their own salvation. Although he continued to organise the Indian nationalist movement he insisted that the Indians should contribute their share to the struggle of the Empire. He emphatically dissociated himself from the Bureau of Indian nationalism opened by the German Government at the end of 1914. From this bureau agitators desperately tried to undermine India with the help of the Congress Party. But Gandhi warned all Indian leaders against what he called 'dishonest political methods' that is of associating with an Imperialist enemy.

The Congress movement itself was not very new, nor was it purely Indian in origin. The movement was in fact founded in the 'seventies under the spiritual guidance of two British Liberals, A. O. Hume and Sir William Wedderburn. At the turn of the century an extremist section demanded violent opposition to the British régime, but the majority of the Congress Party remained under its last pre-

war president, J. K. Gokhale, strongly under the influence of the original Liberal ideas of co-operating with the British. Gokhale, who had acted as Gandhi's spiritual coach long before he left for South Africa, was pleased about the return of Gandhi to India, but he was also worried because of Gandhi's *hind Swaraj* ideas, which threatened to impose a Hindu rule over the varied continent of many races, religions and languages. In fact on his death-bed Gokhale made Gandhi promise that he would travel in India for at least one full year getting acquainted with conditions before he started his activities. Gokhale knew that the leader of a homogenous minority of 150,000 Indians as in South Africa was not yet quite ripe for Indian leadership.

Gandhi's loyalty to the Empire went so far that in 1914 he left for England—his second journey there—in order to raise an Indian ambulance unit. The funds were supplied by the Congress Party and members were young Indian students who were nationalists. The contribution of India to the Great War raised in Gandhi's heart the possibility of Home Rule in India, as an expression of Britain's thanks. In fact the war has also opened the hearts of many British officials. On August 20th, 1917, Mr. E. S. Montagu, a man of deep understanding of India's problems, who has become Secretary of State for India, stated in Parliament that :

" . . . the policy of H.M. Government is that of increasing the association of Indians in every

'branch of the administration, and the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. . . . Progress in this policy can only be achieved by successive stages. The British Government and the Government of India . . . must be the judges of the time and measure of each advance."

Thereupon, the Indian Office and the Viceroy remained in constant consultation with each other with regard to India's future. The pace of the Great War became faster and faster and the Hindenburg-Ludendorff offensive almost broke up the Allied lines. Increased efforts were required from all members of the British Commonwealth to halt the enemy. India was no exception. Finally, Lord Chelmsford, then Viceroy of India, signed the famous Montagu-Chelmsford report of April, 1918, with the Secretary of State for India. This report emphasised that India was still a country marching in uneven stages through all the centuries from the fifth to the twentieth, as a result of which the progressive Indians who understood what Constitution meant and who demanded, it did not exceed more than five per cent. of the population. Nevertheless, the signatories of the report admitted that the gradual realisation of provincial autonomy ought to be recommended. This provincial autonomy was to

lead on to the control by the people of India of matters concerning the entire country. They provided for 'searching review' of this line of progress by new investigating bodies appointed by Parliament at twelve-year intervals. Twelve years later the Simon report was the first of these series of investigations.

Up till the Montagu-Chelmsford reform of 1919, India was governed by the Viceroy (Governor-General), who was supreme authority over all India. His agents were the provincial governors who had no autonomous powers. The Viceroy framed the laws of the country with the aid of a Legislative Council. At first he nominated this council himself, but after prolonged Indian nationalist agitation the Morely-Minto reforms were introduced in 1909, as a result of which the Hindus and the Moslems elected some of the members separately. This was partly the merit of Gokhale, Gandhi's predecessor as a leader of the Congress. On his return to India Gandhi found that this measure did not correspond with the political progress of the country and demanded a speed-up of the reforms. The war brought hopes that in return for the 985,000 men of the Indian Army, who assisted the Empire, the reforms would be speeded up. But, naturally enough, Gandhi saw this progress from the point of view of an educated lawyer who had already achieved fame as a victorious nationalist leader in South Africa. He never found time to appreciate the other side of the story, the

difficulty of the British administrators in view of the diversity of views and races in India. Right through the war when preparations were made for 'Swaraj' (Home Rule), the Moslems expressed opposition owing to their fear of a Hindu Government. Their case was made easier by the extremist Hindu agitators who often threatened with the complete wiping out of mosques once Hindu Government came into office. Gandhi, in those days, did not have sufficient power to stop these agitators.

Even Mr. Lloyd George in his message addressed to India, on April 2nd, 1918, and the War Council which met in Delhi at the end of the same month issued an appeal to the Indian peoples which created the impression that independence of India was not far off. The British administrators made this promise in full sincerity and even to-day they are convinced that they are fully carrying out this promise. Yet, when the Montagu-Chelmsford reform came into force through the Government of India Act of 1919, Gandhi felt that he had been betrayed. The reason for this is that the rulers of the Empire were not thinking in years, but in decades. They wanted progress, but on the basis of a gradual, steady development in the twelve-yearly stages of new legislation and investigation, whereas Gandhi, the fiery nationalist was thinking in terms of weeks and months of progress. Both sides wanted the same thing : India's progress towards self-government. But the methods were naturally different.



Yet during the war Gandhi remained in the background. Only once during the agricultural troubles in 1918, at Kaira (Gujerat), did he take up arms on behalf of the Indian peasants. Using the non-violence principle which in India quickly came to be known as 'Satyagraha' he achieved a minor victory which again brought him to the fore, although formally the leadership of the Congress was in the hands of the Hindu scientist and philosopher, Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Tilak was an old man, who was by no means active. The nationalist party was, as a matter of fact, very disunited until 1916, when Mrs. Annie Besant, the famous Anglo-Indian welfare worker, took a hand in the interest of the Indian peasantry. Tilak was recognised as the nominal leader, but everybody already looked to Gandhi for his opinion. When Mr. Lloyd George made his appeal to the Indian people in April, 1918, Indian nationalists waited for Gandhi's approval before they decided to support the appeal.

The pride of the nationalists of India was already wounded in February, 1918, when the Rowlatt Bill perpetuated the provisions of the Defence of India Act: the secret police, the censorship and all other little strictures of war-time Government. Then came the Montagu-Chelmsford Government which Gandhi declared as being worth practically *nil*.

What did these reforms mean? The indisputable authority of the Viceroy was maintained in all matters which the British Government considered

essential such as military matters, foreign affairs, customs, railways, posts and telegraphs, income tax, currency, civil and criminal law, public debt, commerce and shipping. Provincial governors and their newly-instituted legislative councils were to exercise authority over magistrates and police, local self-government, public health, education, public works, land revenue, famine relief, agriculture and forestry. One-tenth of the population was declared to be capable of exercising its vote for the provincial legislative councils, seventy per cent. of which was to be elected by the people. Owing to illiteracy, symbols were allowed to be used as well as the names of the candidates. To safeguard the minorities the people voted in separate electorates. Such separate electorates were Moslems, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, apart, of course, from the Hindus. In order to protect the 'Untouchables,' who had little chance of being elected, the provincial governors were authorised to nominate council members to represent them.

Tory opinion immediately attacked the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms as being too early in view of lack of general political maturity of the people. The introduction of a certain measure of local autonomy in the provinces was regarded as the cause for an alleged marked fall in the efficiency of the administration. The *Daily Mail* carried on investigations which are claimed to have resulted in the finding

that graft, jobbery, the sale of justice and the use of family influence were rife as a result.

On the other hand, Gandhi moved to the fore with an attack on the reforms which he declared to be inconsistent with the promises made to the Indian people during the Great War. Gandhi felt free to organise the revolt against the authorities. But while Tilak was alive, strong measures were impossible. Gandhi was the leader of an activist section of the Congress Nationalism, but Tilak was the formal leader of the movement. Tilak claimed the majority behind him for gradual development. The Rowlatt Bill and the Government of India Act of 1919; gave Gandhi momentous weapons for agitation. When in August, 1920, Tilak, the old man, passed away, Gandhi's activist group took over control of Indian nationalism.



## CHAPTER V

### GANDHI—THE NON-CO-OPERATOR

AT the age of fifty-one Gandhi became the political leader of the Indians. But not until the Indian people realised the peculiarity of Gandhi's methods which were so suitable to Indian thought, because they were based on *Ahimsa*, did he become a man of prophetic grandeur. The next eleven years in his life, from the date when he took over control of the nationalist movement until his arrival in London in 1931, for the Round-Table Conference, form the most moving chapter in his life. The struggle became harder and harder. Conservative opinion was marshalled against him; Indian officials hesitated whether it was better to let him go free or to put him in prison; the Viceroys as they came and went condescended to deal direct with the Mahatma. Yet the higher he rose in the estimation of his people and the British administration, the lower Gandhi insisted on going himself, to be like one of the Indian people. He was beginning to get grey hairs, his teeth were falling out, his weight was diminishing owing to hard political work and to his incredibly frugal private life.

His Hindu thinking was a great help to him. He .

knew that the Indian revolt would come like a tornado, but he was anxious to control it, to guide it. His mind, trained in European law, was steeped in Indian philosophy, but fortunately he was not sufficiently a Hindu scholar to waste his brain in the unlimited labyrinth of Hindu thought as represented by the holy writings. Nor did he intend to create the impression that Hinduism was the exclusive moral force for Indian development. Gokhale's advice to go and find out all about India was very useful. Gandhi already knew that India was not only the country of Hinduism. Romain Rolland, who wrote most beautifully, if not sufficiently completely and multi-sidedly, quotes the following characteristic sentence in answer to those who feared that Gandhi would disregard India's minorities :

" I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. I believe that the Bible, the Koran and the Zendavesta are just as divinely inspired as the Vedas. . . . Hinduism is not a missionary religion. It leaves room for all true prophets of the earth to be respected and adored . . . it tells everybody to love God in his own fashion ; therefore, Hinduism knows how to live in peace with other religions. . . ."

Long before Gokhale's warning Gandhi already showed understanding of such principles. In the *Hind Swaraj* which he wrote in South Africa he had already expressed : " All religions are different routes converging towards the same goal."

When a Christian priest questioned him about the

book which had the greatest influence on him, he unhesitatingly answered "The New Testament," but at the same time he also has room in his heart for the pagan cults of India as in his famous *Credo* issued on October 6th, 1921 :

1. " I believe in the Vedas, in the Upanishads, in the Puranas and all that are included in the holy Hindu writings ; therefore I believe in reincarnation."

2. " I believe in the caste discipline of Hinduism, but only in its spiritual sense and certainly not in its actual, grossly misdirected and cruel form."

3. " I believe in the protection of the cows, again in a holy sense and not in its popular form."

4. " I do not condemn the pagan cults."

This bold statement often formed the basis of many attacks against Gandhi, who was accused of leading India from a progressive State back to the mediæval state of the country. In his *Ethical Religion* and *A Guide to Health*, Gandhi is preparing the Indian people to a compromise of the modern principles of living with the peculiarities of Indian history. In these books Gandhi developed the full line of thought which, to his mind, justified the abandoning of European civilisation from an Indian's point of view. He tried to prove with simple rules of life that the machine-made civilisation of the Westerners was neither healthy nor sound in India ; he tried to argue that the Indian who, very much like the Russian, was introspective, would lose his happiness if controlled by this machine-age civilisation ; but he

also gave it to be understood that even from the point of view of European morals the principles applied by the British authorities in India were not correct.

On April 6th, 1919, Gandhi announced his first *Haral* a day of prayer throughout India for the future of the people. It was his reply to the appeal of the Viceroy to accept the reforms introduced as the first step towards self-government. The 'Satyagrahi' (non-violence) committees throughout the continent began to collect signatures for the movement. Even among the Indian Nationalists there were many who did not understand Gandhi's motives; they ridiculed the assumption that British administration could be made amenable to reforms by violence. In Delhi there were riots. Gandhi decided to go there personally to enlighten the mass with his view. But the police arrested him and forced him to go back to Bombay. This news received in various districts infuriated the Indian mob. The worst riots were in Amritsar where the mob resisted the orders of General Dyer to abstain from all kinds of meetings. An enormous crowd collected on April 13th to celebrate a Hindu festival. Among the crowd were Indian nationalist agitators. General Dyer was forced to open fire. Five hundred to six hundred Indians were killed and martial law proclaimed in the Punjab. From all parts Gandhi was criticised for the apparent worthlessness of his non-violence theories. Anti-Gandhi agitators alleged that had the Indian mob

assaulted the troops well armed there would not have been so many Indian victims. Gandhi's non-violence principle apparently led to more violence. But Gandhi met the critics with a collected composure and a bitter smile. He never made a secret of the fact that non-violence was not an easily understood weapon.

Yet instead of exploiting the Amritsar massacre Gandhi suspended his political campaign on April 18th, 1919, not so much to calm Indian opinion as to give freedom of action for the European opinion to understand Indian events. It was a masterfully move. A Government committee of investigation was appointed under Lord Hunter. The Indian Congress appointed its own counter-committee, but Gandhi's calm move secured for the Indian movement many friends. He demanded the recall of General Dyer only. But the Indian Government quickly passed the Indemnity Act of 1919, which protected officials carrying out Government orders. The Lord Hunter committee diplomatically condemned the Amritsar incident, without condemning General Dyer.

Gandhi then made his second clever move. Realising that so long as the Hindu-Moslem disunity remained, the Government always had a chance of justifying strong police and military action to control the Indian people, he made a direct appeal to the Moslems to join the Indian nationalist movement, which he decided to make a continental movement instead of only a racial movement. It was not



Gandhi's fault that this side of his policy has not been successfully developed. It is possible that the British officials were cleverer than him in influencing Moslem opinion. Moreover, the wealthy Moslem elements always remained distrustful of Gandhi's Indian nationalism, and are so even to-day. But in 1919 there was a chance of uniting Hindu-Moslem opinion and Gandhi made a sincere effort to do it. In those days Moslems were dissatisfied with the British Government, whom they made directly responsible for the dismemberment of the Caliphate in Constantinople. For the 80,000,000 Moslems in India the war presented the difficult problem of fighting against the spiritual head of their religion. The Sultan of Turkey entered the war with a declaration of holy war. The British appealed to the Moslems of India to fight the Turks on condition that the institution of the Caliphate remained unharmed. The British Government did make an effort after the Great War to stop the trend of young Turkey against the Caliphate; that was the idea behind the support given by the British Cabinet to the Greek Armies fighting the Turks. The promise could not be kept once the Greek Armies were defeated by the late Kemal Atatürk (Grey Wolf). But the Moslems of India were agitated. A movement known as the 'Khilafat' (Caliphate) was opened and on November 17th, 1919, the Indian Congress assisted in the organisation of a great Khilafat day which led to the Khilafat Congress of

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November 24th, 1919, at Delhi. The impossible became true. Gandhi, the Indian nationalist, presided over the Moslem religious conference. He announced that all people living in India "whether Hindus, Moslems, Christians, Parsis or Jews must fight for the justice of our cause." Gandhi appealed to the people calling upon the memory of those killed at Amritsar where Moslem and Hindu blood was mixed in the interest of the nation's future. To exploit this, the next Khilafat Conference was held in December, 1919, in Amritsar, where Hindus and Moslems held the first joint service on the graves of those killed. This conference prepared the ground for the great Hindu-Moslem joint non-co-operation movement which was to be opened in the following year to widen the scope of non-violence already introduced to the Indian masses.

On December 24th, 1919, King George V proclaimed the new Government of India Act, which was to implement the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. The King also called upon the people to co-operate with the officials and recommended an amnesty to be granted by the Viceroy.

But the atmosphere following Amritsar was much too loaded with bitterness among the masses. A terrorist campaign was opened by extremists despite the warning words of Gandhi. In the Congress, Gandhi had a hard fight to denounce this terrorism, although he himself admitted that the new reforms were inadequate. Yet he retained

upper hand. Congress condemned terrorism and re-affirmed the principle of non-violence. But the terrorists were out of hand and many Europeans were killed. In return the Government was forced to apply the strong hand and the cause of the amnesty naturally suffered. To stop the terrorism many agitators were executed, others sentenced to long terms in prison. The year 1920 opened with bloodshed in many parts of the country and the official report about the events of Amritsar just published was not helpful. On May 28th, 1920, the Khilafat of Bombay adopted the non-co-operation programme advised by Gandhi. A joint Hindu-Moslem Conference held at Allahabad re-affirmed the decision a month later. Everything was set. An ultimatum was addressed to the Viceroy to fulfil the demands of the Congress within one month, failing which non-co-operation would begin. Gandhi personally addressed a letter to the Viceroy to re-consider his policy. In this letter he wrote: "There are only two ways left for me. Either I give up all association with Great Britain or, if I believe that the British constitution is superior to all other constitutions, to demand justice on the basis of that constitution. Because I still believe in the superiority of the British constitution I counsel my people to disobey the orders of the Indian Government. . . ." Thus the legal mind of Gandhi tried to legalise a revolt against the Government.

The Government had no choice but to refuse an

ultimatum. Afterwards critics of Gandhi pointed out that the ultimatum was not really in his nature. An ultimatum was certainly not in keeping with Jainism. But Gandhi had to yield to the extremist section in Congress who continued to pour cold water on his policy of love. On July 28th, 1920, Gandhi announced that non-co-operation on a large scale would be proclaimed on August 1st. Non-co-operation consisted of:

1. Abandoning all titles and honours.
2. Not subscribing to Government loans.
3. Boycotting Government schools.
4. Private litigation instead of recourse to British law. This meant a boycott of British jurisdiction and caused immense losses to British lawyers.
5. Boycott of the Legislative Councils set up in the provinces under the new reforms of the India Act of 1919.
6. Absence from all Government receptions, meetings and other official functions.
7. Refusal of all civil and military posts.
8. The propagation of *Suadeshi*, a new gospel of Indian self-sufficiency which was tantamount to the boycott of British goods, but also of British ways of living.

The non-co-operation campaign was preceded by another day of *Hartal* (prayer) which the Moslems also proclaimed. He used this day to impress the

people with the necessity of complete order, of avoiding bloodshed and of carrying out the campaign with absolute perfection and tranquillity.

On August 1st, Gandhi was the first to return to the Viceroy his gold Kaisar-i-Hind medal which he received for his welfare work in South Africa, his medals from the Zulu war and resigned from all his honours which he received in connection with his ambulance work during the Boer War and the Great War.

To be sure there was no complete unity among the Indian people. Many officials remained at their posts and ignored the non-co-operation appeal. But hundreds resigned and accepted the charity of Indian Congress funds rather than continue in the service of the Government. Many soldiers refused to continue service and submitted to a court martial, rather than ignore the orders of the Congress. To maintain the movement within its dignified barriers Gandhi and his deputy Maulana Shaukat Ali travelled from village to village explaining the principles of non-co-operation and counselling non-violence. This was a triumphal tour which the Government did not fail to observe carefully.

To carry on his campaign properly the *Swadeshi* became a national creed which created an entire school of disciples who studied the various ways of making the Gandhi-ist ideas of economic self-sufficiency effective. Thus arose the campaign against the cotton goods of Lancashire. To realise

this task the Indian farmers were given to understand that low as was their standard of living already, they could not save themselves from the exploitation of alien industries, unless they reduced this standard farther and became accustomed to making the best of their own material. Gandhi himself sat down to a loom weaving *Khaddar* (cotton cloth) to show the people that it can be done. In his speeches he continued to condemn the machine and praised the hand. He claimed that the sowing machine could not displace the ordinary needle and the typewriter did not make handwriting superfluous and that in case of national necessity both the needle and the hand could be re-established in their former place to make one independent of the industrial control of the British administration.

Both Hindus and Moslems took vows never in future to wear anything but home-spun cloth. Ladies of the Indian society in Bombay and Calcutta joined the movement to wear only this cloth. Lancashire began to turn into a distressed area. The chambers of commerce began to appeal to the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy to do something against the *Swadeshi* movement.

The personal sincerity of Gandhi in throwing himself into the movement amazed everybody. Rabindranath Tagore, the famous Indian writer and philosopher wrote: "I am amazed at the effectiveness of his humanity. An ascetic himself, he does not frown on the joy of others, but works for the

enlivening of their existence day and night. He exalts poverty in his own life, but no man in India has striven more assiduously than he for the material welfare of his people. A reformer with the zeal of a revolutionary, he imposes severe restraints on the very passions he provokes. Something of an idolator and also an iconoclast, he leaves the old gods in their dusty niches of sanctity and simply lures the old worship to better and more human purposes. Professing his adherence to the caste system, he launches his firmest attack against it where it keeps its strongest guards and yet has hardly suffered from popular disapproval as would have been the case with a lesser man who would be much less effective in his efforts. Here, I said to myself, is a truly great man. For he is greater even than the creed he professes. Great as he is as a politician, as an organiser, as a leader of the people, as a moral reformer, he is greater than all these as a man because none of these aspects and activities limits his humanity. They are rather inspired and sustained by it. Though an incorrigible idealist and given to referring all conduct to certain pet formulæ of his own, he is essentially a lover of men and not of mere ideas, which makes him so cautious and conservative in his revolutionary schemes. If he proposes to carry out an experiment for society, he must first subject himself to its ordeal. If he calls for a sacrifice, he must first pay its price himself. While many Socialists wait for all to be deprived of

their privileges before they would part with theirs, this man first renounces before he ventures to make any claims on the renunciation of others."

Truly a great definition of the soul of Gandhi and his methods, of the man who aroused the mind of the Indians against the injustice to his country-men, only to tell them that they must not fight for it; they must remain passive and resist negatively.

Even the *Swadeshi* was not always carried out to the letter. The mob often exploited the orders of Gandhi. In Bombay, thousands of Indians danced madly around a burning pile of expensive foreign textile materials. Even C. F. Andrews, afterwards one of the closest English friends of Gandhi, wrote protesting and suggesting that these materials might have been given to the poor, instead of being destroyed to satisfy the mob instincts. On the other hand many Indian merchants made the best of the boycott of Lancashire goods by quickly establishing home-made cloth factories in order to supply the needs of nationalism. C. F. Andrews even went to the extent of shedding the *Khaddar* which he wore himself to show that he supported Gandhi's ideas. In reply Gandhi deplored all forms of violence, but admitted that the burning of foreign material, even though it frequently caused harm to Indians themselves, was a necessary surgical operation in order to establish the *Swadeshi* on a firm basis.

As non-co-operation also included the boycotting of the English schools, the Congress opened hundreds



of schools in various parts of the country. To complete the educational system November, 1920, Gandhi inaugurated in the National University at Ahmedabad. Unity of the Hindu and Moslem teachings was the basis of this new university which became the centre of the nationalists. At this university, following a curriculum laid down by Gandhi, Hindus were compelled to become familiar with the Koran, and vice versa the Moslems were to learn to appreciate the Vedas. The local dialects were taught with Hindustani as the leading national language, though English was by no means excluded. Cleverly the university placed emphasis on the fact that Hindustani had many Moslem influences, from Iran, and Afghanistan. But in Gandhi's dreams this was not only just a university, but also the basis for a new moral upbringing of the Indian people. To achieve this the university also had an institute specially devoted to the study of non-co-operation at which teachers rather than the pupils were almost expected to live the life of a monk, again in the interest of the future of the nation.

According to Gandhi's plan they had to take six vows, the vow of never telling a lie, the vow of *Ahimsa* (non-violence based on pure love of everybody), and the vow of celibacy. Celibacy was taken in the sense that one could marry and even have a child or two, but after a certain time a vow would have to be taken that the wife would be only looked upon as a friend. Without this the two

former vows cannot be carried out in the eyes of Gandhi. In this instance, however, one must not lose sight of the psychological effect of Gandhi's own matrimonial life. To go against marriage altogether would be contrary to the advice of many Hindu holy writers. But to live a married life, only to take the vows of celibacy later on, as in his own case, was a different matter. This was a question of defeating one's own passions, this being an element of self-discipline which is closely connected with Gandhi's mode of life. The fourth vow is that of controlling one's own household in order to avoid unnecessary food ; next came the vow of not stealing. This did not concern the ordinary conception of stealing. Gandhi pointed out that it was necessary to train oneself not to use things given to us by nature unless they were absolutely essential to maintenance of life. To use things beyond that would be stealing. Finally there was the vow of non-possession. In order to simplify life one must have no possessions whatsoever. These six vows were fulfilled to the letter by Gandhi himself.

Faced with such a tremendous movement of popular revival founded upon a combination of such mysterious—and to Europeans out-of-date semi-religious sentiment—the Government lost some of its assurance. On November 6th, 1920, Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, issued a warning against any violence, but he did not realise that non-violence was a much

more dangerous weapon. Not until the wave of non-co-operation began to affect distant villages did the Government become a little worried about what it was all about. In December, 1920, Congress met at Nagpur and declared that nothing less than complete Home Rule would stop the movement. Gandhi placed his own dream the *Hind Swaraj* at the head of the campaign.

The Nagpur meeting was the first to comprise a nation-wide movement which has become a force. There were 4,726 delegates, including 469 Moslems, 65 Sikhs, 2 Parsis, 2 Untouchables, 4,079 Hindus, 106 women. The Congress elected a Congress Committee of 350 members which carried on during the year. The members of the committee appointed the Congress Executive consisting of 15 members. Such an organisation headed by the enthusiasm of Gandhi indeed became a State within the State. The Congress was an example of Moslem-Hindu unity, but joint political aims did not mean that Gandhi was ready to forgo his ancient religion, or that he wanted the Moslems to forget the Koran. On the contrary he insisted that each of them should retain and respect their religion. Maulana Mahomed Ali was one of his best friends, a leader of the Congress movement among the Moslems. Yet Gandhi did not allow his daughter to marry a son of Ali. Later on when Gandhi's son had a difference of opinion with his father he left the Hindu religion and became a Moslem. He did a thing which his

father never forgave him. But with all the emphasis on the separate custom of the Indian religions he maintained the political unity between Hindu and Moslem. In the years during which he worked together with Ali, he never accepted an invitation to a meal, nor did it occur to Ali to invite himself into Gandhi's house for a meal.

This was no easy job. For the next two years his speeches were full of affirming that India could be united despite the tremendous contrasts. He quoted incidents of his own life and the life of other Indians to prove that the burden of life and hopes of the future were identical for everybody whether Hindu, Moslem, Untouchable or Parsi. In fact non-co-operation was raised to the level of a religious movement which gave Gandhi the first opportunity to deal with Untouchables in the same manner as with any other class. In fact he strove to use non-co-operation as a political method not only against Great Britain, but also to level out differences between the classes.

His association with the Moslem Khilafat movement was not half so shocking to Indian conservative opinion as his efforts to bring into the national movement the Untouchables with the same rights as any other section of the Indian population. He succeeded in moving the British Government towards fairly fast reforms but he did not succeed in curing India of the pest of the Untouchables as a social class. Maybe that is the reason why later, towards

more recent dates, he practically entirely neglected Congress work to devote his life to this section of the Indian population.

In the same way as he presided over the Khilafat meetings he also organised meetings for the abolition of the Untouchable class. This part of his Congress campaign was opened at Ahmedabad on April 13th, 1921. At this Congress he had a committee of High Brahmins who agreed to devote themselves to the abolition of the pariah classes. In his speech which, according to many writers, was the most beautiful of all his speeches contained something for all sections of the Indian community. It was designed to give the Untouchables confidence in themselves, the Hindus believe in the religious aspect of the liberation of the pariahs and the Brahmins new happiness for living for the Untouchables. Gandhi's fervour attracted curious cases of devotion to the cause. Ladies of the high caste decided to get married to members of the Untouchable class. Rich; wealthy young men have taken up domestic service, or the jobs of sweepers in order to live together with the pariahs. This fervour was not sufficiently well organised to do away with the problem as Gandhi desired it. But it certainly broke the ranks of the castes, so that after thirty centuries of caste life there is at last a chance that its worst features may disappear within a generation or two. From the date when this movement was launched, the Government began to realise that Gandhi

was a power to reckon with. They ridiculed his efforts to boycott British goods for years, but when they saw Brahmins of high caste throwing away their social positions for the sake of an idea, they began to be worried.

Indeed Gandhi's powers as a national leader were almost unlimited at that moment. Whatever he would have ordered, the majority of Congress would have willingly followed him. But Gandhi's greatness must be measured not only in achievement, but also in negative moves, such as control of the movement. Non-violence taught him many lessons of the dangers of exploiting political success too much. In all his political career he spent half of his time calming his followers, taming his extremists, teaching the hot-blooded to await the right moment to strike. When he heard that in some parts of India the ignorants painted him as a God he lost his temper. In newspaper articles and speeches he turned against such misuse of all his efforts. He declared that his achievement was only worth while as a human being, as a member of the Indian community, not the best of it, but as a member of the poorest classes, simply because he dreamed of an India consisting of men, poor, but bred on love and respect of nature. To make a superhuman creature out of himself, Gandhi maintained, would defeat his efforts.

But the mob did not always follow there idealist methods. Riots after riots followed and the

Government's patience was exhausted. Despite repeated warnings the gap increased between the Government and the people. In May, 1921, 12,000 workers of the poorest class, attached to the tea plantations at Assam struck work, threatening their employers. It was a mass rising which could only be answered by calling out the troops. The number of killed is not known, but the railway employees called a general strike in protest. This could only be broken in July with the help of Gandhi who mediated and who even went to the extent of meeting Lord Reading, the Viceroy, to arrange for a compromise of the two intransigent sides. But again tempers were disturbed far too much to arrange for a calming down of the country. In Malabar, in Nasik, in Behar further bloody riots followed and the native police was massacred. The Government was forced to take violent measures, which were answered by Gandhi with a campaign to boycott the visit of H.R.H. Edward, Prince of Wales, now the Duke of Windsor. On July 28th, 1921, the Congress committee, sitting in Bombay, announced that the Congress would boycott the visit. For the first time Gandhi went beyond the frame of the administration to offend the Crown. But he explained that this was regarded by him as a necessity in order to arouse the Indian Government's interest in the fate of the thousands who were arrested all over the country as a consequence of the strike movements. Gandhi placed himself at the head of a

mission of Congress committee members who travelled from town to town calling upon the Indians to boycott the visit and to demonstrate against the Prince of Wales by further strikes.

For the first time the Government felt that Gandhi ought to be arrested. But a man who could turn Brahmins to behave like pariahs was obviously more than a politician, he was a saint ; therefore, the Government was afraid of making him a martyr, his arrest was avoided as long as possible. Even in August, 1921, when Gandhi went with Ali to pacify the revolting Moslem workers in Malabar, the authorities did not arrest him, though they held him up at Calcutta. Maulana, Mohamed and his brother Shaukat Ali were arrested for inciting speeches, but he who was the most outspoken of all was not even touched. In October the two Moslem leaders of the Congress Party were tried at Karachi and sentenced to two years' hard labour ; Gandhi took up the cudgels against the Government for this harsh sentence ; he accused the Government of trying to suppress all rights of free speech and criticism. With the approval of Congress he decided to go one step farther in his non-co-operation campaign. He announced the nation-wide campaign for the non-payment of all taxes to begin on November 17th, the day when the Prince of Wales would be due to land at Bombay. The authorities almost called off the visit, but Lord Reading decided that the visit would have to take place according to



programme in order not to show weakness on the part of the Government. Furthermore, there were signs that the boycott would not be complete in any way. In fact only the poorer middle classes and the workers regarded Gandhi's orders. The better classes in the towns celebrated with the official classes and the Army. The visit was a success despite Gandhi's campaign. The Prince saw a well-ordered progressive country of immense wealth, the Indian Princes showed complete loyalty.

The co-operation shown by the wealthy Indians, especially the Parsees, infuriated the mob. In such cases Gandhi had a difficult time in trying to pacify them. He knew that in the presence of a Royal guest the troops would show no mercy, since order would have to be maintained at all cost. Soon after the Prince's arrival in Bombay the mob began to break the shops and to stone public buildings. With great personal courage Gandhi stood in the centre of the crowds and addressed them in his thin voice, exhorting them to go home and continue non-co-operation in the only effective way possible, that is non-violence.

A crisis came on December 24th, when the Prince was due in Calcutta. Gandhi prescribed a day of *Hartal* as a protest against the arrests. At the Congress which followed, the ranks of the leaders of the national movement were depleted since the arrests continued daily. Knowing that in such circumstances the life of the Congress was not safe

from police persecution it was decided to give Gandhi dictatorial powers to lead the movement, even in the absence of any committee meetings, should it become necessary. There was only one condition : that he should not make peace with the Government without the assent of Congress. But for the carrying on of the struggle he got plenary powers. He was dictator of a movement which involved masses far greater than the masses even of the greater Reich. It was the climax of his career.

The Congress was held at Ahmedabad. Soon after the break-up of the Congress a large number of the delegates were arrested. Again, the leader, the dictator, the saint was left free. Following a principle of organisation which was applied by the illegal Communist Party before the war the Congress workers were numbered in each district to take over power in case the members with previous numbers were arrested. As soon as the Government arrested five leaders of the Congress committee in a certain district, the next five took their ranks. There was no end to the movement. Thousands were already in prison, but thousands more rose to take their places. Things were moving towards a new climax. On February 9th, 1922, Gandhi sent an ultimatum to the Viceroy from Bardoli, in the Bombay Presidency. In a polite but energetic letter he demanded that the policy of the Government should be changed. He demanded release of the prisoners, powers to the Congress, freedom of speech and Press.

He threatened that failing a satisfactory answer the revolt on a larger scale than ever would begin.

This was a direct challenge to the Government. But the Viceroy would probably have been able to avoid this challenge and maintain calm dignity had not a violent disturbance occurred at this critical moment at Gorakhpur. The police tried to break up a political procession, when they were attacked by an overwhelming crowd. They were forced to open fire and retire to the police buildings. The mob set the building on fire. As each of the inmates emerged and asked for mercy he was knifed in cold blood.

The situation was like a powder barrel. The Viceroy ordered better equipment for the police to defend themselves against any attackers. New Government buildings not yet completed were hastily turned into emergency prisons in which hundreds of agitators were thrown, troops were ordered from the north to come to the south. Both sides, the Indian Government and Gandhi, felt that something had happened which was not the fault of either side. Many of the Indian extremists, hiding behind Gandhi's loin cloth, drove mobs into frenzy and then threw the blame on Gandhi. For days Gandhi was silent as he usually is when something important faces him. His entourage tried to play games, introduced music to cheer him up. All in vain. He was forced to realise that India's illiterate millions were not yet ripe for the high ideals of non-violence.

Ali had days of discussion with Gandhi. He told him :

"These days make me doubt whether we have chosen the right methods. Why don't we do something which will unite these forces which are ready to fight for anything?"

Gandhi used to remain silent. After a few hours of contemplation he gave his answer :

"Non-violence is the only thing that is the right thing for us."

A few days later he decided to call off the boycott of the law in order to renew his training of the people for non-violence. On February 11th, at the Baroda meeting of the Congress committee of 350 of which only about 200 were present (the others being in prison and their substitutes prevented by the police from attending the meeting) a revolt threatened against the leadership of Gandhi. The extremists thought that they had had enough of Gandhism. But the mass remained faithful to him. The others were just political leaders. He was a saint. On his side were the women leaders of the movement, especially Sarojini Naidu, tall, rotund Indian poetess who made a name for herself as the bard of the Congress movement. In his address Gandhi moved the women to tears. He said :

"The only virtue towards which I aspire is truth and non-violence. I do not pretend to possess superhuman faculties. Nothing of the kind. I have the same corruptible, weak body as everyone of us

or even the weakest among us and I am also liable to make mistakes. My powers are well limited ; but so far God has blessed them despite my imperfections. . . . I feel stronger to-day because I have admitted my mistakes and our cause must progress and must gain even from our apparent falling back . . . the method which led to the recent massacre is a poison in our minds . . . it is not unique, nor is it isolated . . . real civil disobedience should not be linked up with any disorders. It is preparation for silent suffering. Its effect is marvellous, though it seems small and sweet. . . . This recent tragedy should serve as an indicator for our future path. If we do not wish violence to arise out of non-violence, we must be prepared to slow down our pace, we must go back a bit on our way in order to re-establish a calm atmosphere and we must not think of re-starting mass-disobedience until we have made sure of the fact that peace will be safeguarded at all cost. . . . Let the enemy accuse us of laxity ! It is better to be misunderstood than to betray God. . . ."

Already pamphlets were being distributed by the small, but growing opposition to Gandhi's passive resistance pleas. In these pamphlets Gandhi was revered as a religious saint, but he was attacked for the 'out-of-date methods' he employed. Some of his critics even accused him of serving British interests by disarming the Indian people.

Gandhi's answer was a fast for five days. His diet already reduced him to less than eight stones, but he thought nothing of eating even less. But with this fast Gandhi wanted to do more than punish himself for his mistake of hastening too much with disobedience before the mass was trained. It was also a means of drawing the attention of the nation to the sincerity of its leader. It was Gandhi's method of carrying on propaganda. In order to prevent further violence, Gandhi declared, he would be prepared to go to any length, to accept any suffering.

the human beings, I have stopped not only civil disobedience of the masses, but even my own. . . . The second time I was warned by the events in Bombay. God was my eye-witness. I again stopped disobedience until my meeting at Bardoli where it was to be re-opened. The humiliation was greater than before, but it did me good. I am sure the nation as a whole has profited by this delay: India remained the representative of Truth and Non-Violence. But the bitterest humiliation is that of to-day . . . God has spoken clearly through the recent events. . . . When Indians want to step up to the throne of liberty by non-violence, the outbreak of violence is a bad augury for us. . . . The Non-co-operators must check the violence of the land. This will not be possible until the hooligans of India (the men who are blind) are mastered. . . ."

Thus Gandhi admitted the shortcomings of the Congress movement. But at the same time he also prepared a split of Congress. His critics said that the repeated stopping of the revolutionary disobedience stifled the enthusiasm of the nation, that it was dangerous to Congress, since it gave time to the British authorities to fortify their positions in India. But their amendment to the resolution stopping disobedience was voted down after a new passionate appeal by Gandhi to wait and train the people. At the end of the meeting came a dramatic moment.

Gandhi screamed to his opponents : " You do not want Non-Violence ? Get out of the Congress ! Form a new party ! Announce to the public your policy. Let the country choose between us . . . but do not let us have half-measures ! You must be frank with yourselves and the people of India."



## CHAPTER VI

### GANDHI THE PRISONER

GOVERNMENT agents were everywhere within the Congress and without. Every single word uttered had been reported to the Government. The reports seemed to be encouraging. Gandhi was no longer a leader without opponents. His prestige appeared to be on the wane. There was a strong opposition both on the left and on the right. It created the impression in Government circles that the time has come to arrest Gandhi. With the growing opposition against him there seemed to be no danger of his becoming a martyr and a threat to the administration. When news came of the warrant being prepared for his arrest Gandhi retired to his favourite school at Ashram, near Ahmedabad. Some of the younger members surrounded Gandhi offering to resist the police until death. He laughed at them. "Do you want to make me ridiculous?" he asked them and insisted that they should leave him in peace.

Indeed while the Congress committee continued to sit at various points, maintaining contact with Gandhi through couriers, Gandhi himself spent his

days quietly in contemplation and prayer. Only a few friends remained near him, including Mrs. Gandhi who came down from the north to be a 'friend' to her husband and a new arrival 'Mirabai,' an English lady called Miss Madeleine Slade, daughter of a British admiral, who was fascinated by the ideas of Gandhi and several times asked to be allowed to serve him as a handmaiden. She gave up her position, her freedom, to be dressed like an Indian woman of the lowest class, merely to be present in the small 'Court' of Gandhi.

When Mirabai arrived Gandhi neither objected nor approved of her presence. But later he told his wife to discourage her in view of the heavy tasks placed upon all those who surrounded him. But Mirabai was happy at spinning near Gandhi and Mrs. Gandhi persuaded her husband to accept the position as it was.

On the evening of March 10th, 1922, shortly after prayer, policemen arrived with the warrant to arrest Gandhi. Evidently they expected a little trouble, because a few hundred yards from the house two military lorries were drawn up, with a detachment under arms. With Gandhi was Banker the editor of *Young India*. They were both taken away. The women were allowed to accompany the little party to the prison doors.

It was an event of importance not only for India, but for the whole world. Newspapers everywhere sent their reporters to India to be present at the

trial which was regarded as a duel between the Great Empire and the Congress movement.

The trial opened at the Ahmedabad session on Saturday, March 18th. The procedure was speeded up as much as possible in order to avoid keeping Gandhi behind locked doors without a trial. It was one of the strangest trials. It was not a trial where the strict military judge faces a desperate rebel. Mr. C. N. Broomsfield, the judge and Gandhi exchanged courtesies and the cross-examination was on a very high intellectual level. Neither side lost its temper even for a moment.

It was not an easy matter for the Crown. After all Gandhi preached non-violence and called off non-co-operation the moment disorders threatened to upset the country. But his articles preparing the moral revolt against the Empire were devastating. These articles, mostly published in *Young India*, were the basis of the case against him. The worst of them was this :

"No compromise with the Empire," wrote Gandhi, "while the British lion insists on showing us his bloody paws! . . . The British Empire which is based on the exploitation of the races which are physically weakest on earth and on the application of brutal force, cannot last if there is a just God governing the Universe. It is high time that the British people should realise that the battle which commenced in 1920 is a battle until death, a battle which may last a month, a year or several years. . .

India since his return from South Africa two and a half years earlier.

His friends in court tried to interrupt him. But with the gesture of a saint he went on monotonously taking responsibility for the damages caused by Indian nationalism going far beyond the charge laid against him.

The climax came when he read a declaration addressed to the Indian and British public explaining how after twenty-five years of co-operation with the Empire he was driven into disobedience. He told the court of his own personal sufferings, of the sufferings of young Indians both in London and after the completion of their studies when back in India looking for jobs in the Indian Civil Service or judicature. He became very irate and exclaimed that India was being kept down by the authorities, was becoming degenerate and would require generations before she could progress to the stage of dominionship in the circumstances of the time.

With the scrupulous fairness of English courts he was given a chance to relieve his feelings. There was no interruption.

A delightful scene followed. The judge told Gandhi that his task was difficult in view of the confessions Gandhi made and in view of his position as the head of a great party. The judge even admitted that he regarded Gandhi as a great man, as a saint.

In many ways Gandhi was happy in prison. He was tired after his campaign of nearly three years and needed time for rest and concentration. Imprisonment reduced Gandhi's political influence, instead his prestige as a saint increased immensely. The people regarded him as an incarnation of Shri-Krishna. According to the legend Shri-Krishna submitted to the test of prison suffering to emerge victoriously. The legend seemed to suit Gandhi admirably.

The fate of the saint produced a veritable campaign of religious hysteria. Thousands prayed to get the same fate and threw themselves in the way of the police in order to get arrested. Thousands preached the most effective civilian disobedience in order to share the fate of the Mahatma. It was a new form of self-inflicted suffering for India where the religious mass regards the fakirs with envy for their strength of mind defeating suffering and approaching Nirvana. Politically it was a different story altogether. On June 7th, 1922, the Congress committee met at Delhi and the pro-Gandhi faction bitterly witnessed the astounding outbreak of Congress opposition to Gandhi's ideas. In his last message before going to prison Gandhi counselled patience and gradual progress. The speakers asserted that Gandhi's voice having been silenced by the prison there was no sense in carrying on a programme which most of those present did not believe in. The leaders of the opposition wanted violence and carried the struggle

## CHAPTER VII

### GANDHI AND THE VICEROY

GANDHI was only compelled to spend two years in prison. He was no violent rebel and his exemplary behaviour was commended by the prison authorities. In 1924 he was released. The Viceroy decided that it was the best thing to do in view of the split Congress opinion. It was thought that in view of the difference of opinion, that Gandhi was better out of prison than inside. The British advisers to the Viceroy expected a struggle within the Congress which would relieve them of much of the trouble the United Congress caused to them.

They were not far out in their calculations. Gandhi found a Congress committee almost out of hand when he got back from prison. His first desire was to go to his *Ashram*, near Ahmedabad. Gradually he felt that his strength was coming back to him. He spent 1925-26, travelling across India to train the people for their future task of carrying out non-co-operation without violence. He struggled against the critics who maintained that it would be better to give up non-co-operation and carry the fight right into the heart of the enemy. Their programme was :

1. Formation of a *Hindu Swaraj* (Home Rule) party which would fight for seats within the legislative councils.
2. Return of the officials to the courts, and the schools, the State officers to carry out sabotage of the State from within.

Letters, appeals and memoranda reached Gandhi from opposition in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and other towns, demanding that he should fight with the weapons of the State.

To them Gandhi issued his famous articles published in 1926, in *Young India*, in which he branded these methods as immoral and contrary to justice. On numerous occasions he offered to resign his seat and leadership of the Congress but his sincerity was appreciated even by his greatest critic, Vitalbhai Patel, later President of the Congress. Patel ridiculed the idea that the English could be changed by means of love and the sufferings of the Indians. In the Congress committee meetings, Patel charged Gandhi with sufferings of the people without commensurate return.

"Over 100,000 have been imprisoned since the non-violence campaign started, what did we get in return?" he asked of Gandhi.

Gandhi remained silent. His followers answered for him. They said that the suffering was necessary to prepare the Indian people for the task of political maturity.

Gandhi himself usually retired to his camp near Ahmedabad to fast for a day or two to atone for the sins of his opponents, as he called their actions and criticism. Often this method infuriated his opponents even more. They described it as a method of moral blackmail, though they dared not face the saint's reputation in public. This is how Patel put it: "What has been accomplished by Gandhi? More than 100,000 Indians have been thrown into jail, an equal number have been beaten by the police, and thousands have been sentenced to death. I myself was in prison twice, on one occasion for six months, but I was not treated badly. The leaders, who make up one per cent. of the movement, were not maltreated; it was the remaining ninety-nine per cent. that suffered. And what they endured as political prisoners! Many were beaten so severely that they collapsed, and yet, in conformity with Gandhi's doctrine, they loved England. But all their tribulations gained them nothing whatever. Many of us have therefore come to the conclusion that this doctrine is no good, that we cannot win Europe over through love. Here is the point at issue between Gandhi and us. Gandhi places non-resistance above everything else, but the Congress leaders like myself say that the freedom of the country comes first. I am of the opinion that the English Government is heartless, whereas Gandhi believes that the English Government can be prevailed upon through love. England has become great by means



of India and England cannot get along without India. She will give way to India only if she is compelled to do so by brute force."

The year 1926 was a turning point in Indian history. Lord Irwin was appointed Viceroy and the British Government evidently gave him instructions to approach Congress leaders for negotiations within certain limits. In the following year a Parliamentary Commission was appointed under the then famous lawyer, Sir John Simon (now Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the Liberal Nationalists). This was a committee of investigation appointed to direct the road of Indian administrative progress. It had four years to study the question and to prepare recommendations for Parliament. This was in accordance with the twelve-yearly periods of review under the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. The period started in 1919 and ended in 1931, when the Round Table Conferences in London designated the new road towards Federated India.

Gandhi left his camp at Ahmedabad to go for a new round of political meetings in the country. While the Government made efforts to find ways and means of negotiating with Congress, Gandhi agreed with some of his opposition leaders that the time had arrived for a little more energetic action. The appointment of the Simon Commission indicated that the British Government was determined not to deviate from the road prescribed in its earlier plans. Therefore, Gandhi decided to

male population cannot read or write. In 1918, when the Spanish influenza broke out in India, it claimed 12,750,000 victims—more than were killed in the whole World War. The death-rate of India amounts to thirty-two per cent. compared with twelve to thirteen per cent. in America and England. . . . People in Europe believe that India would be contented if it were granted Dominion status like Canada and Australia. This is not true. We want complete independence and separation from England. We want to trade freely with whatever countries we choose. The Canadians and Australians are English people who emigrated and colonised the land on which they settled. But the Indians are an entirely different people with a different culture, a different civilisation, a different religion, and a different language. Ninety per cent. of the people speak only one language—Hindustani. Of the entire Indian population not one half per cent. speaks English."

That Vitalbhai Patel discredited his methods was a painful experience for Gandhi. He began to consider retirement from political life to his beloved *Ashram*, his school and camp at Sabarmati, a bare half hour by road from Ahmedabad. He longed for the quiet concentration which was only possible in the country. In both Congress meetings in 1927 and 1928, Gandhi broached the subject of his withdrawal from Congress leadership, but there was a renewed outburst of Congress enthusiasm on his behalf. Patel attacked Gandhi's policy in a

two-hour speech demanding that Congress should revise its attitude towards the Government. Gandhi replied in a three-hour speech in which he analysed the history of Congress achievement. He claimed that in the light of his policy, Congress had grown within eight years into a national movement of tremendous importance, that it could no longer be regarded by the Government as a minor issue.

In this atmosphere the Simon Commission began its proceedings. Its sittings were boycotted by Congress and this order of the Congress committee also meant that irresponsible elements believed that they were entitled to terrorist actions. As a result every session of the Commission was heavily guarded.

Among those who were examined by the Commission were many members of the Indian upper classes, those whose commercial position and interests linked them closely to the Empire. They all declared that whether they liked it or not Gandhi was a force to be reckoned with and that unless some measure of responsible Government was granted, the danger of complete independence enforced by Congress revolt would grow.

Back in London, the great Parliamentary campaign of Mr. Winston Churchill against further reforms in India began, but by now the Indian Civil Service reports covered the findings of the Simon Commission in its early stages, that some sort of definite promise had to be made to placate

Congress movements. Gandhi himself declared to his friends that unless something definite happened, Indian nationalism, which was still young, uneducated and violent, could not be held back. Although the findings of the Simon Commission were not ready until 1930, the Government found it necessary to declare in 1929 that 'Dominion status' was the goal towards which the British Government was working in India.

Gandhi received the news in Sabarmati. For three days nothing was heard from him. 'At his beloved *Ashram* nobody heard his word.' The leader of Congress contemplated his next move. Then a violent series of articles began to appear in the Congress papers signed by Gandhi. In these articles he denounced the British Government as not trying its best to satisfy Indian wishes and that the mere announcement of 'Dominion status' was entirely unsatisfactory, not only from the point of view of the extremist opinion, which wanted complete independence, but also from the point of view of a definite promise of carrying out its promises within a certain time. The Viceroy's declaration, according to Gandhi, was just like his previous promises vague and, therefore, valueless.

Gandhi's wife raised her voice at Sabarmati, perhaps for the first time against her husband's articles. She thought that the articles contained too much incitement. She told her husband to return to the school to contemplate for a few days before.

he issued another violent article. But Gandhi thought that the time had come to whip the British Government. Opposition in Congress acclaimed Gandhi once more. The opposition leaders knew better than Gandhi. Within a few days violence broke out in many parts of India. The Viceroy's train was bombed. Bloodshed occurred in several places in the Bombay district. A bomb was thrown in the Indian Legislative Assembly.

Again Gandhi fell into a depression and started a week of prayers. He would rather call off the whole campaign than allow violence to go on, he told his court of women, which included his wife, Najdu the poetess and the Mirabai, the English lady who joined the *Ashram* after repeated applications, which were at first ignored by Gandhi. But it appeared to be too late. The Government's repressive measures had to put an end to the outbreak, but Gandhi's pen rested for a few months while Patel and his friends sent him letters calling upon him to pronounce open revolt. He ignored these letters. Only once did he lose his temper. That was in 1929, when a delegation of extremists visited him in Ahmedabad. Furiously he told them that India wanted peaceful development through love and not through bombs.

Every word that Gandhi uttered was duly reported to the Government. This was the time for the Government to approach Gandhi for a 'truce.' The first efforts were made. Government spokesmen

approached Gandhi's friends in order to arrange an interview between the Congress leader and the Viceroy in Delhi. But this interview did not take place and Gandhi did not meet Lord Irwin until 1931. The reason for this is not quite clear, though it is probable that the mediators chosen were not of the right type to carry out such a delicate job to the satisfaction of both sides.

There was certainly no lack of enthusiasm on the part of Lord Irwin, who recognised Gandhi's qualities. Later on, in 1932, when he delivered an address at Toronto University after his retirement from his difficult post he said: "Gandhi appeals to the deep forces in Hinduism of which we know little and he leads his followers into realms of thought where we can hardly follow. His onslaught on Western materialism strikes a responsive chord in Hindu hearts, even though the hum of his spinning wheel sounds faintly against the reverberation of the mill . . . and by reason of Mr. Gandhi's devotion to ideals and readiness to impose and to accept any sacrifice that he can convince himself is calculated to forward the single purpose, his power over his Hindu followers differs in kind from that of any other, and as often as he cares to stir them, so often will vast numbers of them respond . . . partly, however, through temperament and often perhaps through circumstances, Mr. Gandhi has repeatedly disappointed many of his warmest friends by his failure hitherto to evolve, and win support for, a

considered and constructive policy. Here is one of the major tragedies of the Indian situation. . . ."

For those who know Gandhi the major tragedy was that a meeting could not be arranged between the Indian leader and the Viceroy, who had so much insight into the soul and methods of Gandhi. Two years of struggle followed during which the terrorism of the Indian extremists and the reprisals of the Government made it impossible for Gandhi to approach the Government.

The year 1930 opened with a difficult position. The Government held its hand while awaiting the publication of the Simon Commission. Gandhi himself was in a difficult position with the extremist wing of Congress. Partly to take the wind out of the sails of the opposition section of Congress and partly to divert the attention of the Indian people from the terrorist actions which spread all over the country, he organised his famous march to the sea to manufacture illegal salt. The British administration had just introduced a salt tax which made the manufacture of salt virtually a Government monopoly. Only those who paid the duty received permission to make salt, others preferred to buy the Government-made salt which included the tax.

For six weeks Gandhi organised his march with the understanding of a skilful advertising agent. The world's Press learned little by little about his plans, the route his group was to take, the goat's milk, nuts and fruit which he would eat. The march

made him the idol of the masses. Newsreel operators, cameramen, reporters from all over the world watched the weary old man *en route* towards the sea where he made salt out of sea-water to infringe the law.

Gandhi's march acted like the fuse of a bomb. Its ingeniousness appealed to the imagination of the world, but it aroused India. The Government officials realised that this was more than non-co-operation and civil disobedience. It was an open anti-law action which could not be ignored. The effect of the salt-law march was heightened by the wrong repercussions. Gandhi meant it as a propaganda march in favour of his own ideas. Instead the masses took it as a hint for further terrorism. There were bloody risings in Chittagong and Peshawar. Trains were attacked, rails torn up. There was no alternative but to arrest Gandhi again. Lord Irwin reluctantly gave the orders to arrest the 'holy man.'

The Indian terrorists answered by murdering many British officials and throwing bombs at public buildings. Additional troops were brought up to guard the headquarters of the provinces. In this atmosphere the Simon Commission which had been working for three years published its report. The Commission had been working upon its report in England for many months before it was published and its publication loosened a storm of pros and cons, which was watched by Gandhi in the prison of



Poona with great interest. But it also made the task of the Indian Government more difficult. A certain amount of indecision characterised the movements of the Viceroy's surrounding, while Gandhi was given full freedom in the prison.

When in accordance with the recommendations of the Simon report the first Round Table Conference met in London in the autumn of 1930, Congress was not represented. While Gandhi was in prison Congress took no decisions which would have been contrary to the wishes of the leader. In the absence of the largest organised political movement in India the Round Table Conference was certain to fail. It was adjourned without any definite results. The India Office reported to the Government that Gandhi's co-operation had to be secured to produce any useful results. Although the Simon report recommended a certain degree of provincial autonomy with British control in the centre, without Congress there were no parties to make use of Government powers. The Viceroy issued an appeal to all Indian organisations to co-operate in efforts to produce responsible Indian Government in the provinces.

In prison, Gandhi had been forced to think a little more about himself than before. Thanks to the influence of the three women who constantly watched his health, in the neighbourhood of the prison, a dentist got to work on his teeth. A new set of false teeth had been produced for him. The three women who were responsible for this were

Mrs. Gandhi, Sarondhji Najdu and Mirabai Slade. But Gandhi only used this set of teeth, a contemptible achievement of Western civilisation, when it was absolutely essential for his small meals. Otherwise the set of teeth reposed in the only pocket of his loin cloth.

The most outstanding of the women in Gandhi's surroundings is undoubtedly Mirabai, the daughter of an English Admiral, whose utter devotion to Gandhi has certainly left many a mark in the small cottage at Sabarmati. Her courage kept up the morale even when Gandhi was in prison.

Mirabai's rôle in Gandhi's life is the preparation of his scanty meals. Gandhi's loin cloth is laundered by her. Her accent is the accent of the better English middle classes, but she wears *Khaddar* of the roughest sort and her hair is shaven off in the Oriental style to remind her of humility. Her name is really Madeleine Slade, and she is the daughter of Sir Edmund Slade, a former Admiral of the East India Station. She was obviously repelled by the etiquette and restrictions of naval life. In her younger days she was the 'belle of Bombay Society.' At the age of nineteen she accompanied her father on a visit to the Governor of Bombay and took part in all functions of high society. She was impressed by the blind faith of the Indians during the visit of the Prince of Wales, in the leadership of Gandhi.

Tired of social life she took eagerly to books of all

kinds in search of a more austere philosophy of life which would provide her with spiritual happiness. That is how she began to read Gandhi's articles and books. In the quiet home of her parents at Dorking she ruminated about her own future and when she felt that Gandhi's ideas attracted her she wrote at once to the Mahatma asking him to accept her as a pupil at his school, the *Ashram* at Sabarmati, near Ahmedabad.

But this was not quite so simple. Gandhi was never keen on taking in pupils who were not absolutely ripe for the super-austerity of life at the *Ashram*. He had a fan mail of his own like a Hollywood film star, and treated the letter of Miss Slade lightly. He thought that life would be too hard at the *Ashram* for a girl educated in the West. At the same time he gave her a chance. He welcomed the opportunity to bring about a unity between East and West, and advised Madeleine Slade to impose a test which both he and his correspondent were to accept as binding. Miss Slade accepted and eagerly awaited the details of the test. So he told her to undergo a year's strict probation in England before going out East. Details of the test were :

To learn Hindustani.

To give up all meats in her diet.

To give up alcoholic drinks.

To give up all luxuries.

To learn to spin.

Madeleine's friends were amazed when she began her period of probation. But they thought that this was another one of her whims which she would soon drop again. Nor did Mahatma Gandhi think more of it until the end of the year when Miss Slade renewed her application and gave details of her probationary period, which she thought gave her full happiness and satisfaction. When the day arrived a cable reached Gandhi's cottage. The Mahatma was persuaded by so much devotion and persistence and issued the invitation so much desired by Miss Slade.

In the Dorking home of the Slades there was a feeling of consternation. But Madeleine Slade sailed for India with happiness in her heart. At Sabarmati she was the heart and soul of the party. There was nothing she would not do to please her master. She took up the Hindu religion and was given the name Mirabai—Mira being the name of the goddess of Hindu love and beauty and 'bai' meaning sister, to indicate her decision to live the life of an everyday poor Indian woman. In Gandhi's little home at the *Ashram*, life was humbler and poorer than in the homes of many poor Indians. But Miss Slade was hardened by her probationary period and she accepted this humble life happily.

Gandhi's *Ashram* was never based on the common everyday custom of India which subjects the woman into a secondary position. Strange as it seems

Gandhi who believes in reincarnation, in the sacredness of the cow, who had room even for idol worship in his heart as well as for the caste system, insisted always on the equality of the sexes. But he also insisted on Mirabai doing the same work as he or other members of the Seminary. Mirabai asked no questions, but the master felt that he had to explain things slowly to his pupil from Dorking. He told her that the effort to elevate one's soul was easier through the subjection of the body and no task, necessary in the daily routine of human life, was in any sense degrading.

So Mirabai did everything in the house including kitchen work and scavenging and sweeping which in India is usually reserved for the 'Untouchables.' This was a more revolutionary action than any left-wing movement in Europe. For a high caste Hindu like Gandhi, and an Englishwoman of the higher middle class to undertake the work of outcasts, was indeed revolutionary.

While Gandhi completed the last few days of his march to the sea to manufacture illegal salt he sent her on a tour around India to inspect the depots of *Khaddar*, the home-spun material, which Gandhi regarded as an essential element of his national work. Gandhi knew that he would be arrested sooner or later and did not want Mirabai to run the risk when he arrived at Dandi, on the seashore. In any case he trained Mirabai to devote herself to the promotion of the national *Khaddar* scheme.

to England to accompany Gandhi, journalists assailed her with hundreds of questions. They wanted to know whether she was homesick, whether she could stand the work with Gandhi, whether she had any desire to return to the beautiful surroundings of Surrey, whether she had any feelings left for people of her own race.

Mirabai smiled gently and said: "I am only coming to England because I have to. . . . To me it is like coming to a foreign country. My heart is in India and always will be."

The *Ashram* with people like Mirabai was a small, but powerful moral force behind Gandhi, even when he was in prison. And the first Round Table Conference showed that without the participation of Congress no progress could be made with the recommendations of the Simon Commission. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, then Prime Minister of Great Britain, decided that Gandhi must be brought within the talks. Instructions were sent to Lord Irwin and as a preparatory step to negotiations with Congress Gandhi was released.

The Mahatma realised that fresh winds were blowing from London, so he was tactful enough not to say anything about the failure of the Round Table Conference in 1930. Nor did he re-open the civil disobedience campaign, thus allowing the Government an open door to approach him.

But the extremists and terrorists took no heed. In vain did Gandhi appeal to them through the

columns of all the Congress organs that terrorism was not the way to free India. An attack was made on the Governor of Punjab in 1931. This was the signal for many violent riots. British police were attacked, houses of British officials were bombed and the boycott of British goods increased.

In the spring of that year Lord Irwin the Viceroy invited Gandhi to Delhi and negotiated with him the famous Delhi-pact according to which Gandhi would use all his influence to stop terrorism, while the Viceroy agreed to release most of the nationalist leaders in various jails. Gandhi was overjoyed. To his friends he often repeated :

“ Free India is only the question of a few years hence. We have at last found the right way.”

He did not realise that India was not developing in the way he wanted it, though the constitutional reforms were being pushed ahead by the resolute administrators of British India, without heed to terrorism. For Gandhi definitely lost all control of the terrorist movement. In the same year when the Viceroy negotiated a ‘ truce ’ with Gandhi, some of the worst terrorist acts occurred. 1931 will be known as the year of the murder of the magistrate of Midnapur, Mr. Peddie, the assassination of Mrs. Curtis, wife of a British officer. Her children were also wounded. In addition the harmony between the leaders of the Moslem Caliphate movement and the Congress did not seem to have the slightest effect on the masses as was shown by the violent

massacre of the Moslems by an infuriated Indian mob at Cawnpore.

This was the year then of Gandhi's departure for London to join the second Round Table Conference at St. James's Palace.

He was accompanied by two other Congress delegates, Pandit Madan, Mohan Malaviya and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu when he boarded the liner *Rajputana* at Bombay. Mirabai and Mrs. Gandhi planned to send some goats with the holy man to supply him with his favourite goat milk, but this was found impracticable. Therefore, 120 quarts of ritualistic pasteurised milk were supplied to him to satisfy the requirements of his religion. A first-class state room was placed at his disposal by the British Government. But he refused to accept it. Instead, he slept on a wooden bench in a cabin in the tourist class.

It was real joy for Gandhi to be on board *en route* for London. He did not hesitate to talk to all who approached him, nor did he make a secret of his pessimism. "My expectations of results are zero."

Gandhi's journey was by no means unanimously approved by Congress sections. The Nehru section, who always wanted to carry opposition into the camp of the Government, was pleased. But other sections could not forget that only a few weeks before his departure he attacked the Government for an alleged breach of the Delhi pact. He then firmly announced that he would not attend the



second Round Table Conference unless the Government of India would yield to his demand and appoint an arbitration board for the purpose of determining whether the British had violated the pact of Delhi between Gandhi and the Viceroy of India.

At the last minute, however, an inner voice urged Gandhi to go to London. When he announced this his critics began to laugh. Lord Irwin left and the new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, who had just arrived, appreciated Gandhi's decision and announced that an enquiry would be started into the alleged excesses of tax collectors in the district of Bardola, one of Gandhi's pet accusations.

Gandhi was very happy on board. It was the first real change of atmosphere since he returned from South Africa, twelve years before. He made friends with the ship's cat, played with the children, caressed babies, joked with the other passengers, studied the reports of the first Round Table Conference and prayed for hours for the success of his campaign. At the age of 70 the ship journey made him feel a young man full of energy.

Among his best friends on board were members of a family of Christian missionaries in a neighbouring cheap cabin. Often he attended the services they organised on board. Gandhi hinted that his favourite hymn was "Lead, Kindly Light." The captain honoured him by asking the missionaries to sing

this hymn. Gandhi joined whole-heartedly in the Christian chorus.

At Aden, Gandhi was awaited by an immense crowd of Arab sympathisers and Indian enthusiasts as he stepped ashore to visit the city. The Indian business men passed the hat around and presented him with the results of the collection : £250. Gandhi was in very good spirits and replied " I expected far more than this, but you probably know that I have no real use for the money as far as my own person is concerned. . . . But I will distribute this fund among the 20,000 men and women working for the Indian Nationalist Congress. I represent not a hostile India, but a helpless India. . . . I am trying for a settlement which must come about peacefully. India is a big nation, able to hold its own without interference from London or an outside power, but the London Round Table Conference must settle our fate one way or another. . . . Islam means unity, therefore, you Moslems, too, should help from the outside, for the sake of co-religionists who are already united with us. I shall strive for a constitution that will release India from the thralldom and patronage. I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice ; an India in which there is no high class and no low class of people : an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony."

This speech given on Arab soil made Gandhi feel

religiously uplifted. On the same afternoon, he addressed a group of Indian students on board. In the evening he summoned his party to prayer. "We humbly ask the Giver of all Gifts to give India her freedom." With this prayer Gandhi led the service. The party squatted on the floor with heads bowed and eyes closed, silently contemplating and praying.

At the same time Gandhi did not forget his spinning wheel. He devoted all his spare time to spinning on board. Thus the little party sped towards the London where the Indian colony turned out in large numbers to welcome the leader. A first-class carriage was placed at his disposal from the port up to Victoria. But he chose a humbler second-class carriage. He was asked by journalists whether he intended to appear in his home-spun village dress at St. James's Palace, where the conference and the King's receptions were held. He declared, "I have taken my vows of absolute poverty and they are still binding. I believe I will honour the King and the people of Great Britain by keeping true to my ordinary habits of life rather than by making any exception to my vows."

The numerous Indian families of the intelligentsia, who have houses in London's West End, offered their hospitality to Gandhi. But he politely declined them all. He preferred to move to the East End. Many a poor Indian student advertised in India the goodness of Miss Muriel Lester, a

woman who is maintaining the Kingsley Hall settlement at Bow.

The arrangements for him were made by C. F. Andrews, his Englishman friend who had often been told by Gandhi in his letters that he wished to remain among the poor.

He had not been in England since the days of 1914, when he organised an Indian ambulance corps for the Western front. The climate in London was never to his liking, nor did it suit his frail constitution. But even in London, he kept his daily routine of the *Ashram* intact as much as possible. Every day he rose at 4 a.m. for his early morning prayers. Most of the people with him at Kingsley Hall, when he stayed there, rose with him to attend his prayer meeting. Indians, Europeans, Christians, Hindus, Moslems and Jews attended. At these meetings Gandhi prays silently, then the *Gita* is read quietly awaiting the rising of the new day which is again and again dedicated to God.

At seven o'clock in the morning the work of the day begins. Two political secretaries help him to open letters and deal with them as they are opened one after another. From his days as a lawyer he became accustomed to answering every letter immediately. His appointments are also kept with the same legal punctuality. Two hours later the little party sits down to a frugal meal of goat's milk and fruit. This routine was scrupulously maintained

in London as well. At this hour, when Gandhi breakfasts, he has already been up for five hours without any food whatever.

In India Gandhi usually spent the whole morning seeing visitors, while towards midday he snatched an hour for sleep. In London there was seldom time for sleep. Correspondence was very heavy and the various Congress members in London had to be received, contacts between Indians and Western progressives reinforced, newspaper men had to be received, Indian students and colonists living in Europe appealed for short audiences. There was, indeed, seldom time for sleep. After this came sometimes more goat's milk and fruit, sometimes no food at all, but Gandhi sits down by the side of his spinning wheel to spin his own cotton yarn. Not even the heavy business of the day in London during the Round Table Conference made him give up this habit. At five o'clock supper follows. The menu is exactly the same as for the other meals. After that Gandhi usually takes an hour's walk. At seven o'clock prayers follow.

After prayers, Gandhi endeavours to spend an hour or two quietly contemplating. As far as possible he avoided the heavy round of functions which were connected with the Round Table Conference in London. At the latest at 10 o'clock he usually retires. Six hours of sleep is all that he requires before the next day's heavy round begins again.

One of the most difficult things for his political opponents to appreciate is his decision to remain absolutely silent for one day every week. Business or no business the silence is observed with the rigidity of the two minutes' silence at the Cenotaph on November 11th. In London, both the British authorities and the Congress members appealed to him to abandon this practice of his because it meant that the working week was reduced to four days as in addition to the two weekdays Gandhi was not available at the committee meetings at St. James's Palace for another day during the week. His iron will enforced this ascetic rule even in London in the same way as his iron determination keeps him going year after year working hard, despite his advanced age. Often he tried even in his own surroundings to belittle his achievement and importance. For many years, for instance, he was opposed to the 'Mahatma' description, because his own sense of humour, which is very highly developed, did not allow him to accept such a title. But it stuck to him despite his objections, except at the *Ashram* at Sabarmati, where he is simply called 'Bapu' which means 'Daddy.'

Gandhi's presence at the conference was, however, not altogether helpful in every respect. Naturally, as the leader of the greatest organised national movement—not only of the British Empire but of the whole world (with the possible exception of the Kuomintang)—he could not be left out. But his

presence made the representatives of the princes and the business communities in India a good deal more cautious than before, especially when questions of federal structures were considered, since the Round Table Conference was expected to solve not only the question of provincial autonomy, but also the relationship between the parts of India governed from Delhi and the Chamber of Princes.

Already in 1930 this question was found to be a very difficult one in view of the tremendous differences between the States. But at the conference in St. James's Palace, Gandhi insisted on being present at the 'Federal Structures Committee' sittings to discuss ways and means of doing away with the feudal systems still ruling in India under the protection of the British rule.

But the biggest problem was still the relationship of the Moslems and Hindus. The extremist in Congress denied that Gandhi could solve this problem by love and pointed out that the British Government was never interested in finding a solution for it—on the contrary they accused the British Government of encouraging uncompromising nationalism on both sides. The Cawnpore massacres of Moslems opened the eyes of Gandhi as well. Frankly, the Mahatma admitted that the problem was far more difficult than he imagined and for the first time envisaged the possibility of failure on the score of pure love. He

Sarojini Naidu who a few weeks earlier took me along to the Student Movement House in Russell Square, where a meeting was held in honour of Gandhi's birthday. The students, many Indians, and even other students of all nations, brought him little presents for the day, one came with an orange, another with an apple, a third with a banana . . . what else could one give to a man who threw away wealth to become the poorest Indian. Mme. Naidu called to the students and in her address pointed to Gandhi, "Look at him," she said, "look, the Mickey Mouse of world history." That was the first thing that came in my mind when I had a better look at him in the light.

"How long is the yarn you spin every day?" I asked.

"The yarn I spin during the day is hardly worthy of attention, but think if all the three hundred and forty million inhabitants of India all got down every day to a little spinning-wheel! . . ."

I really wanted to ask him next about the textile crisis in Lancashire and whether he intended to go to Lancashire to study the position. But his answer made this quite unnecessary. It seemed to be pretty clear that the production of *Khaddar* would remain the cardinal point of his policy. So I turned to the question of the Round Table Conference and wanted to know whether he was optimistic about the outcome of the deliberations in London. He answered in a humorous mood.



"I have no fear about the outcome of the conference ; far more do I fear journalists. . . ."

"Will you go to America?" I asked. "I heard reports that you were preparing to go there."

"I like the Americans" answered the Mahatma, "they show a sincere and active interest in our fate. Nevertheless, I do not think I could undertake the journey."

"Why not?" I interjected.

"Because I do not like masses."

This seemed a bit confusing. I insisted on an explanation. After all, did not he have to deal with large masses in India. I expressed my surprise at his answer.

He replied : "It is true that I have to deal with very large masses in India, yet masses in the United States differ totally from the masses in India. If I meet the Indian masses I give much to them, but I receive far more than that from them. That is not the case with America. The Americans are different. All they want is impressions from me and of me, but they do not give me anything. . . ."

A blonde young girl interposed a question. "What is the secret of happiness?" she wanted to know.

The Mahatma looked out above the spectacles which had glided down his nose and stared at the girl. Slowly he answered her.

"The secret of happiness on earth is to make oneself independent of the outer world . . . to seek happiness in oneself and not elsewhere. There

in yourself you will find happiness. If in the morning one does not get a cup of tea . . . well . . . one ought to be completely satisfied with a glass of water.

Quietly, I left the small room. Gandhi smiled at me. It was a farewell smile in lieu of a handshake since his hands were busy on the spinning-wheel.

I began to understand the mystery of Gandhi. Here was a man, whose personal property would probably not fetch twenty shillings. Yet he had found happiness, and had more power and influence over millions than any millionaire. He was a man with an almost uninterrupted smile on his face when in public. I was told that once in India when journalists persisted in annoying him for an interview, he declared that no interview would be given unless the journalists contributed to Congress funds as a compensation for the interview. He took the hat of a journalist and passed it round like a beggar. In this manner the leader of the nationalist millions of India collected about two pounds and then gave an interview.

But his personal popularity in London may have been almost unlimited. At the Round Table Conference he was a failure. He satisfied neither his Congress friends nor the British delegates who expected from him some compromise to work out the future of India. The problem was immensely complicated. On the one hand, the conference had to find a solution for the problem of representation,

to the many diverse sections and parties in India, so that the legislatures to be created under the *Simon report* should be really representative. On the other hand, it had to prepare the ground—on the basis of majorities for one party of the legislature—for responsible ministries which would command the confidence of the country.

Over and above the problem of provincial administration was the supreme problem of federal authority. Yet despite all these problems the Round Table Conference demonstrated more than anything else that even Gandhi and the Congress could not produce a united continent. There was no inner spirit of unity nor unity of language, least of all unity of purpose and methods among the delegates.

This lack of unity was often almost bitterly admitted by Gandhi. In the *Harijan* (one of his Congress organs specially founded to deal with the cause of the 'Untouchables') he once wrote: "The communal riots in Allahabad—the headquarters of the Congress—and the necessity for summoning the assistance not only of the police but even of the military, show that Congress has not yet become the substitute for the British authority."

Gandhi was never forgiven for this statement by Congress extremists. They shouted at him: "How can you lead us if you do not believe in independence."

Gandhi usually answered: "Independence may lead us into an abyss if not properly prepared."

The methods of Congress in achieving this unity rather remind outside observers of the dictatorial and totalitarian methods of some other countries. But opposing forces are already being organised and they are certainly not going to allow themselves to be 'steam-rollered' into agreement, to use an expression published Lord Lothian, in his famous two articles on 'The New India,' in the *Observer* early this year.

The Round Table Conference of 1931 brought this opposition and disunity out much more than any riots or fights in India. Gandhi was faced with the century-old order of feudalism, custom and mannerisms introduced by the British rulers of the country, and his aim of creating unity in India seemed to be receding instead of approaching.

At the Round Table Conference, Gandhi was also faced with the power of the Princes which he always under-estimated. British India in reality only comprises two-thirds of the Indian continent, while one third is the real Indian India, that part of the continent which is controlled by the Princes. The rest of India may have progressed under the contact and influence of the British administration and army. But the India of Princes remained almost unaffected by the progress of Western civilisation. It remained the India of gorgeous Maharajahs' palaces and pageants.

Yet the conference was more or less a failure because apart from the problem of Hindu-Moslem relations and the place of the Princes in an All-India constitution a new set of problems arose which swept the conference into the background and precipitated new conflicts between authority and people in India.

Gandhi who might have been the uncrowned ruler of India had he found a right way of compromising between Congress and British authority, instead found that his star was rapidly declining in India. In order to maintain leadership he broke with the routine of Congress in order to deal with the new set of problems.

This new set of problems may be described in short as the Bengal terrorist movement. This movement grew out of all proportion in the autumn of 1931, upsetting the whole conference programme. The terrorists in Bengal are mainly students, boys and girls, who believe in the words of Patel that love will never bring the British round to compromise. They believe in the wildest terrorist actions in order to make life for all British officials unsafe.

Gandhi never approved of this terrorism and he issued several appeals to his lieutenants in India to try and stop terrorism which, to his mind, discredited Indian nationalist ideals.

But the Indian Government was forced by the terrorists to bring out firm decrees. A special ordinance was accordingly issued, the penal

provisions of which were almost identical with penal provisions under martial law. There was no alternative since British officials found it otherwise impossible to carry on with their duties.

Gandhi immediately saw a chance to re-establish his authority in India by defending the Bengal nationalists. Though he openly condemned violence he opposed the ordinance and declared that the Indian Government was breaking again the provisions of the Delhi Pact between the Viceroy and himself. He withdrew at once from the Round Table Conference and announced that unless the special ordinance was withdrawn before he left London there could be no peace between him and the Indian Government.

But on such a matter there could be no compromise. The Indian Government would have been guilty of criminal weakness had it yielded to Gandhi's ultimatum. The lives of British officials would certainly not have been worth much had the Government rescinded the order. Even if there had been some desire to compromise this was destroyed by an incident which almost surpassed all other terrorist acts in violence.

One day two young women visited Mr. Stevens, a magistrate in Bengal, in order to ask him to intervene on a subject connected with one of the Indian universities. They handed him a document to read. As he bent down to read the document, one of the girls took out a revolver and shot him dead in cold blood.

Tension grew all over the country as Gandhi landed back in India after the Round Table Conference was adjourned. Despite the fact that he declared that there could be no compromise between him and the Government, the first thing he did was to send a message to the Viceroy asking for an interview. Gandhi did so against the advice of members of the Congress committee who met him in Bombay and who wanted the organisation of a violent general revolt. Gandhi told them that he would never lead a campaign which demanded direct bloodshed. So Gandhi sent off his message to the Viceroy.

The Viceroy replied immediately. He told Gandhi that he would be glad to see him but he could not discuss the new ordinance, the provisions of which had to be carried into effect at all cost to maintain the prestige of the Government. In other words, Lord Willingdon was ready for the interview but not to consider Gandhi's ultimatum.

Gandhi was in an impossible position. Had he accepted the invitation of Lord Willingdon he would have acted according to his own heart and much bloodshed might have been avoided. But it was on the other hand impossible to maintain Congress leadership as the harsh provisions of the ordinance created a tension in many districts.

The result was that the hurriedly called Congress committee endorsed a new campaign of civil disobedience and a 'no-rent' campaign was added to the

various other methods by which the Government was to be boycotted.

There was no alternative for the Government. Gandhi was arrested for a third time and taken to Poona in 1932. Sir John Anderson, the strong man of Indian administration (at present Lord Privy Seal) was appointed Governor of Bengal with full authority to break the terrorist movement and to fight Congress all along the line. Again the time for compromise was over and another period of violent struggle followed, in which Sir John Anderson proved to be stronger than the terrorists.

Sir John Anderson had to contend not only with terrorism but also with the strange effect of the passive resistance movement. Thousands of men and women would simply lie down with their children in main thoroughfares, obstructing trams and cars. Hundreds of thousands of peasants refused to pay rent for their land. Millions refused to obey simple provisions of the law and the cost of maintaining respect for law rose sharply.

Government action won the day, but the problem of progress of political institutions in India still awaited solution. The provincial self-government could not be worked without some measure of co-operation with the Congress Party. So while Gandhi was sitting in prison the Government already began to smooth the path of a new negotiation with Gandhi as soon as the terrorist movement should be,



sufficiently under control, so that the Government could not be accused of weakness in any way.

Gandhi himself expressed this when he was in London in the following manner: "It is very delightful to come to London and meet all you charming and courteous gentlemen; but I find that when it comes to business I negotiate best with the British Government when I do so from behind prison bars." Apparently the British Intelligence Service made a note of it and as soon as a new angle arose for conversations between the Viceroy and Congress, Gandhi was put into jail.

That conversations with Gandhi were absolutely essential was also evident from various opinions which pointed to the wisdom of compromising with Gandhi rather than allowing Congress extremists to get the upper hand.

Mr. H. B. Lees-Smith, Postmaster-General in the Labour Cabinet of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald which organised the Round Table Conferences, himself an Indian-born man who wrote much on Indian problems with which he was well acquainted, once stated that a great Indian merchant told him during the conference: "You at present have to deal with a conference consisting of lawyers, capitalists and princes. Gandhi is a lawyer himself. If you do not take your chance to come to terms with them, you will in a few years have to deal with a conference consisting of Communists and revolutionaries."

Such opinions were expressed by other representa-

tives of the Indian capitalist class, which for many years opposed Gandhi. But they began to realise that, bad as Gandhi might be, worse things might come after his death, since the extremist elements of Congress would take his place in the leadership of Indian nationalism. In fact Gandhi has not been able to maintain leadership of Congress to the end of his life. Extremists took over his place but the new Indian reforms have enabled Congress in many provinces to assume responsible Government. And with responsibility usually comes a certain degree of compromise which is noticeable in Congress leadership to-day.

The principle of the Round Table Conference already introduced a large measure of responsibility for many sections of the Indian community. Instead of ruling by decree the central authority was subjected to results achieved by negotiations at the Round Table in London. This was one of the most ingenious solutions of a difficult constitutional problem cleverly handled by the British administration. Even Gandhi recognised that the superior handling of the situation often helped to overcome difficulties created by Congress. The Round Table Conference gave a certain amount of autonomous character to the whole of India since decisions reached in London would be taken as a basis for future Indian policy. Yet the British Government did not undertake to be bound by the conference, nor did it allow the conference to be held in India ,

which would have created the impression that the British Government was handing over authority to a kind of a Federal Parliament.

With the introduction of responsible Government in the Indian provinces and the suppression of terrorism the position of the Indian political development became immeasurably healthier.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GANDHI AND THE UNTOUCHABLES

ONLY on the question of the treatment of the Untouchables in the new political system of India was there a new conflict. It is true that the Bengal terrorism led to the imprisoning of Gandhi, but terrorism soon disappeared from the main plane of political conversations and its place was taken by the dispute on the political rights of the depressed classes, on which the Indian Government did not have a definite and final policy as yet. Considering it an internal problem of the Indian masses, the Government thought that it would be best to deal with them as a separate community.

Gandhi, who received regular reports in prison, understood the meaning of these provisions. To his mind, the British Government wanted to help Indian feudalism to maintain another one of the class and caste distinctions which were the curse of India. It was also against Gandhi's declared policy of treating the Untouchables just like any other section of the Indian population. Work for the 40,000,000 Untouchables was just as holy to Gandhi as his movement for *Khaddar*. Improvement

of the position of these people was to revolutionise one-fifth of the population of the world. No movement in the west could be compared with the movement for rights of the depressed classes in India in view of the thousand-year-old associations of the rights of these classes with the ruling religion of the country. Gandhi at once recognised the opportunity for a substantial improvement of the lot of these miserable classes by forcing the Government to admit the Untouchables into the political community of India on absolutely equal terms.

So, in order to force the Government's hand, he announced a 'fast unto death' in the Yeravda jail at Poona. It was a fast which again aroused the imagination of India and broke into the columns of the world Press as front page news day after day. It was as if for the time being he had abandoned the problem of India's relations with the British Government in order to concentrate on the problem of internal unity. He had many disappointments in his political works because unity was lacking in India. Hindu-Moslem understanding was as far off as ever and the Mahatma realised that in the first place harmony must be established among the Hindus themselves before the next big problem, the Hindu-Moslem harmony, could be established. Thus he threw the weight of his entire spirituality into the struggle for the rights of the Untouchables. This problem filled not only the days of his imprisonment at Poona, but most of the last six years of his life

up to the time of this writing. He threw up his Congress career for the success of his campaign for the Untouchables because he knew that the right psychological moment had arrived for a direct attack on the problem.

"I claim" Gandhi said, "that my life now—whatever remains of it—is a hostage for the removal of untouchability." The untouchability is in reality nothing else but a colour bar since the aboriginals, which are the ancestors of this class are of darker complexion than the lighter races which entered India from Central Asia and eventually became the high-caste Hindu classes. As the subjection of the aboriginals was completed they were made to perform certain menial occupations which were regarded as pollution by the high-caste Hindus. Thus the whole race became polluted in the eyes of the caste Hindus, and the gap between the depressed classes and the high-caste Hindus became wider and wider as the wealth of the latter grew and emphasised the lawlessness of the outcasts.

C. F. Andrews, one of the best students of Gandhi's life, pointed out that just as the outcast system goes back into the earliest history of India, in the same way the method of 'fasting unto death' which Gandhi chose to defeat untouchability also goes back centuries. According to an ancient Hindu custom penance or sacrifice had to be offered in order to remedy some great personal or national sin or mistake, a fast with such austerity that life is

forfeited is the right thing in such a case. Mahatma Gandhi, therefore, chose a traditional Hindu act to cure the curse of the 'monster of untouchability' as he frequently called this problem. He was, therefore, ready to sacrifice his own life to cure this monstrous evil.

Gandhi never feared death and he faced this fast with courage. He wrote from prison to a friend a characteristic letter in which he stated: "The earlier fast had a political tinge about it, and the superficial critics were able to say that it was aimed against the British Government. But this time the ordeal, if it has to come, will be such that it will not be possible to give any political colour to it. It will be a purely religious fast; and you will recall that the last fast was only broken on the clearest possible understanding that I might have to resume if there was any breach of faith by the so-called caste Hindus."

In another letter quoted by C. F. Andrews, who will probably be the only man really qualified to publish one day the full correspondence of the Mahatma, Gandhi wrote, "The conception of giving my life for the Untouchables is not of yesterday. It is very old. There was no call from within for many years. But the British Cabinet's decision, last August, came like a violent alarm bell awakening me from slumber, and telling me: this is the time. "It, therefore, provided the psychological moment, and I instinctively seized it. . . . In reality it

covers the very things you would have me die for and live for—one and the same thing in essence. For he who sees life in death and death in life, is the real seer. It may be this is my last letter to you. If I die, I shall die in the faith that comrades like you, with whom God blessed me, will continue the work of the country—which is also the work of humanity—in the same spirit wherein it was begun. . . . Meanwhile pray for me, that God may give me enough strength to walk steadily through the veil. If Hinduism is to live, Untouchability must die. . . . If the interests of the country are to be one with those of humanity; if the good of one of the faiths is to be the good of all faiths, this will come only by the strictest adherence to truth and non-violence in thought, word and deed.”

Even during the critical days of his great fast Gandhi never lost his sense of humour. C. F. Andrews revealed the contents of one letter written to him personally in response to an appeal by him to have a little more consideration for ‘Brother Ass’—his body, a description which he took from St. Francis of Assisi.

“I assure you,” he wrote, “I do not want to kill ‘Brother Ass.’ He is in God’s safe keeping. If God means not to spare him, neither your efforts nor mine can save him. For the present he is flourishing on goat’s milk and plenty of fruit (this was written a few days before the great fast began) with home-made brown bread thrown in.”



But C. F. Andrews is sufficiently good a friend of Gandhi to admit that the coercion of 'fast unto death' was subject to criticism, that it was really a form of 'moral blackmail,' though of course Andrews does not go so far as that to criticise Gandhi's action. But he quotes Gandhi's answer to his critics. Gandhi wrote: "My answer simply is that I must not be expected to surrender my cherished convictions because I hold a prominent position in the Indian world, or because I have some political influence. I cannot barter away my faith, or suppress its movement for the sake of retaining my social position or political influence. Everything is subservient and is derivable from that faith. Ask me to deny or suppress it and it would be worse than asking me to commit suicide. I would also venture to suggest that those who subordinate their convictions or political influence can only have shallow convictions. Convictions are made of sterner stuff than that. . . . People have been known to stake their all for the sake of their convictions, which may be called their religion. God will take care of the fasting fraternity. Those who fast will do so for defending truth as they see it; and God, the God of Truth, will do what he likes with them. If their fast is in answer to the inner urge from God, it will be its own reward; and it will be well with them whether the purpose to which it is directed is apparently fulfilled or not."

In this atmosphere Gandhi began his fast and the

whole of India prayed that his life might be spared. For six days and five hours the Mahatma lived on a little drop of water with salt or soda. He gave up his favourite menu of goat's milk and fruit for water only.

The prison authorities did their best to persuade him to abandon his plan. But he was adamant. So the authorities detailed eight doctors to watch his health. His small weight declined from day to day. Anxiety increased. In London, the India Office was in almost permanent council. At last on the seventh day of his fast word came from London that the British Government had agreed to accept the electoral compromise reached between the caste Hindus and the Untouchables. Gandhi stopped his fast. The doctors gradually brought him back to his old diet and to-day he is none the worse for his experience. The whole of India enthusiastically welcomed the saving of Gandhi's life. The British Government on that day made more friends than by many years of work in India.

The agreement which was negotiated in the courtyard of the prison will go down in history as the pact of Poona. Mrs. Gandhi came in daily to help him to recover. She propped him up in his seat to sip musambi, a sweet lime-juice concoction, under the mango-tree in the jail-yard in order to enable her husband to carry on the talks which changed the fate of 40,000,000 Untouchables. Before he touched the first bit of food he insisted on prayer. The prayer

was led by Rabindranath Tagore the poet who came to congratulate his old friend.

The pact of Poona was signed by four high-caste leaders of the Hindus, Malaviya Raja, M. R. Jayakar, Sirtej Sapru and Raja Gopalachari. The depressed classes were represented by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, a graduate of Columbia University, and M. C. Raja. After the signing of the pact Dr. Ambedkar and Raja Gopalachari exchanged pens. Dr. Ambedkar who was for many years a violent anti-Gandhi-ist afterwards embraced the feeble Congress leader.

The agreement drafted by Gandhi's secretary on instructions of the master :

Part one of the pact fixes the number of seats apportioned to the Untouchables in the Provincial Legislatures at 148 instead of 71 as in the previous Government award.

In the Central Legislation, Gandhi insisted that eighteen per cent. of the reserved seats should be placed at the disposal of the Untouchables. The original Government scheme only allowed for four per cent.

Methods of the election were fixed in the pact, one of the provisions being for a primary election at which four Untouchables shall be elected as candidates. One of these four candidates is to be selected by an electoral college composed of both Untouchables and caste Hindus to contest at the general election.

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## GANDHI

the Provincial Legislatures shall continue until further mutual settlement can be reached. The primary election method will cease automatically at the end of a decade, if not terminated by mutual accord earlier.

The Untouchables also have the right of full representation on local bodies. Adequate grants for educational facilities were agreed upon and initialled by all those present.

Earlier Gandhi wrote from Yeravda prison to Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, then Prime Minister of Great Britain, that the proposal for separate electorates was threatening to drive a permanent wedge between Hindus and Untouchables. He wrote "I sense the injection of a poison that is calculated to destroy Hinduism and to do no good whatsoever to the depressed classes."

The Indian Press was jubilant. The *Free Press of India* explained triumphantly:

"Gandhi achieved a miracle. He has brought 40,000,000 Untouchables into purified Hinduism and has enabled 250,000,000 united Hindus to support Indian Nationalism. The pact is a triumph for Gandhi on every front, moral, political and social."

The *Englishman*, a Conservative English-owned weekly wrote: "Gandhi should devote himself to social and moral issues instead of wasting his energies upon an impossible political programme."

The *Times of India*, the most influential English daily published in Bombay, issued a warning against

was led by Rabindranath Tagore the poet who came to congratulate his old friend.

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the spirit of the negotiators of Poona. The social habits of a thousand years can hardly be uprooted in a week, but the institution of untouchability certainly received a staggering blow and one that may prove fatal."

With these considerations in mind the Poona pact may be described as the greatest achievement of a man who was no longer the dictator of Congress as in his younger years. The opposition continued to criticise him uninterruptedly, but nothing could stop the national recognition which followed after the historic scene at Yeravda.

A few days after the pact Gandhi was released and taken to the *Ashram* where he rested for several weeks until he completely recovered from his self-imposed ordeal. Then he gave out the call :

"Go to the *Harijans*—Untouchables—sweep their roads, enter their houses and wash their children."

To reverse the services of a thousand-year-old order was the bold demand of the Mahatma. He then set out for a tour of All-India to convert the entire Hindu population to the spirit of the Poona pact. And at this point the description of his life may well end, for he is devoting the rest of his life to this cause.

This mission has again aroused the imagination of India. The educated Indian classes welcomed this bold experiment against the greatest hindrance of Indian progress, while the Europeans who were often embarrassed by the class distinctions in India,

realised that something of permanent value was being achieved by Gandhi's All-India tour in favour of the rights of the Untouchables.

If Gandhi had done nothing else but reformed the position of the Untouchables he deserves to go down in history as one of the greatest human miracles of the world.



# CINEGRAM PREVIEW

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